Imponderabilia

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Spring 2011

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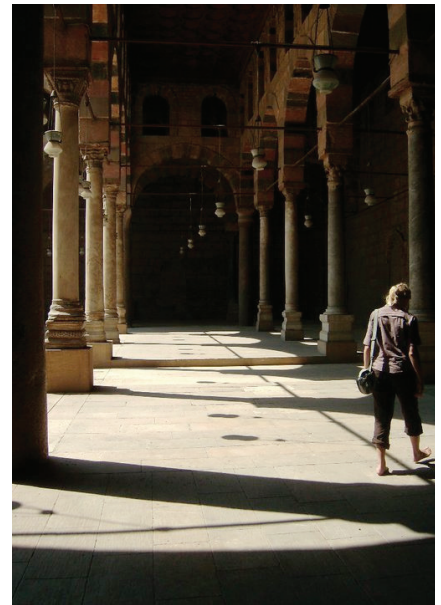treasurer.imponderabilia@gmail.com.
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Editorial

imponderabilia:
"a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot
possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents,
but have to be observed in their full actuality"
malinowski, b. ([1992] 2002) argonauts of the western pacific.
routledge: london

For student anthropologists, the experience of beginning fieldwork is often overwhelmed with planning and over-planning, frantic attempts to learn the local language, and overtly intellectualised approaches to encounters with new people and practices. In a similar fashion, producing this third issue of *Imponderabilia* has in many ways represented a determinedly academic exercise; a kind of pseudo-ethnographic foray into the exotic world of that strange tribe known as professional anthropologists. In the course of producing this journal, we have sought to understand and learn their "imponderabilia" (Malinowski) – through communicating with collaborators in Cambridge and abroad, through fundraising and navigating institutional bureaucracy, and through negotiating and compromising with each other and our colleagues on the editorial team. We have aimed to create, as closely as possible, a Serious Anthropology Journal.

Concurrently, however, producing *Imponderabilia* has been a richly sensory, emotional and affective experience. When we issued our call for papers last October, we were initially terrified by the apparent lack of response – then staggered by the number of submissions flooding our inbox. From across Britain, the United States, Canada,

Spain, Ecuador, Singapore, South Africa and beyond came stories of ethnographic trials and triumphs, theoretical musings, disquieting reflections and moving images. In our ruminations over peer reviews and deliberations between section editors, we discovered that it was all too easy to select articles based on the passions and energy they evoked rather than the academic quality of their writing and the rigour of their analyses. The sentimentality expressed by many of our authors reminded us of the intense curiosity and appreciation for the discipline that we share. So this journal is also an attempt to preserve such appreciation, to protect it from being buried under the pressures of Serious Anthropology.

We hope to present in this issue of *Imponderabilia* the best of both anthropological spheres – decidedly intellectual analysis and raw emotional fieldwork – not as opposing factions, but as vitally interwoven into what we all experience as the compelling power of anthropology. We are grateful to all our contributors, and we hope you enjoy this issue.

– *Camilla Burkot & John Wallis*

Contents

Page 49: Raichur Train Station

I sit on the granite floor, reading *National Geographic*. As the Andhra sun illuminates the glossy pages, I wait for my train to the city. A figure hovers above me, and I turn around. "Namaste," she whispers, plopping down next to me. The girl, who must be five years old or so, stares at my magazine. I look at her and then at the magazine. "Do you speak English?" I ask. No answer. "Hindi sumjay kya?" she asks me. I shake my head. I frown and think for a minute. No matter. As I move towards her, I grin, coaxing her to the magazine. She traces the golden window round the edge of the pages, and our journey around the world begins.

Page 10: A Paradise found in the womb of Greenland causes her to gasp. Jagged ice towers across the smooth page as clouds weave against the amaranthine landscape. She presses her fingertips on the amber sun. Half expecting her skin to burn, she winces, but realizes she is safe and beams at me. I flip the page.

Page 38: We travel to Venice. We watch a reenactment of 17th century courting in which a gloved man kisses the gentle curve of a woman's hand, lace tumbling from her chest. The girl blushes as she points to his lips, curious about the gesture. I realize that this amorous pantomime is not something she has witnessed before. I cannot explain to her what his lips are doing on the woman's hand. Nonetheless, I take her little hand in mine and give it an assured squeeze. Pages rustle.

Page 61: A Rottweiler frozen in mid-air. Arms shot in front of him like superman; he looks as though he is soaring. She takes one look at the picture and falls into my shoulder, laughing and pressing her face

And now the entire station is staring at us: dark shouldered Westerner and curly haired beggar child howling like vagabonds

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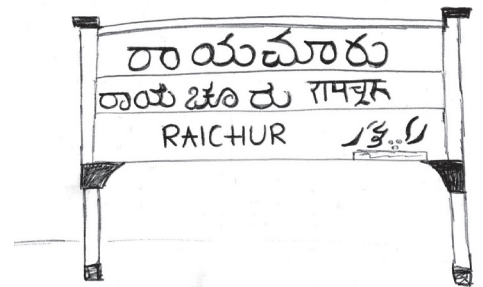
Fig #01

into my body. I gaze at her as her tiny fingers wrap around my arm, her dirty fingernails make her way across my shirt. She claps as she opens her eyes and watches the dog suspended in mid-air again and again. Release. My stomach unclenches, lips twitch into a smile, a chuckle begins in the seed of my belly. Vibrating through my throat and into the air between us, laughter falls from my lips. I begin to cachinnate like thunder as my eyes grow wet. And now the entire station is staring at us: dark shouldered Westerner and curly haired beggar child howling like vagabonds.

Our laughter is interrupted by a high-pitched squeal in the distance. We stop, looking at each other. The train. Her eyes grow dim as she lifts herself from the ground and I pick up my luggage. She hands me my *National Geographic*. I look at it in her terra cotta palm, and push the book to her chest. She is taken aback for a minute. I insist. She hugs the magazine to her chest as her face morphs from a smile to a pout. I lower to my knees until we are face to face. I give her a hug, and

Fig #02

she throws her arms around me. Thank you, I breathe. She nods. She watches my shadow find my carriage. I stand in front of the doorway as the train moves and she walks next to me. The train gains momentum; she sprints. Faster and faster until she lags, huffing next to the sunset. I wave one last time as she disappears into the landscape.

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Fig #01 - Image by Abi Lander
Fig #02 & Fig #03 - Photography by Lottie Unwin

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Fig #03

Reflecting the varied nature of this year's submissions – as well as our aims for the section as editors – the articles which make up the Experiences section are not your typical student ethnographies. Throughout this issue, articles of a more classically academic style are interspersed with these experimental reflections, which respond to 'anthropological' themes in the broadest sense of the term. This year we wanted Imponderabilia to provide a platform for students to explore anthropologically-inspired thoughts and encounters in a more informal, literary context. The Experiences articles presented throughout this issue demonstrate the creative ways our authors have used anthropology to *write with,* as well as to *think with.*

– Emily Parker & Heather J. Murphy

Religion, Ritual & Identity
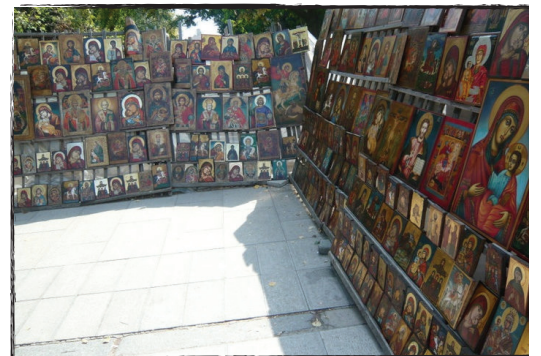
This section explores a short yet vastly complex question: how do religion, ritual and identity mutually constitute each other?

Tristan Partridge examines how the specific genealogy of names actively shapes the identity of indigenous groups in Ecuador's Andes, illustrating how inherited naming taxonomies are not simply determining structural forces, but are constantly renegotiated through everyday praxis. The complexity of identity and its perpetual synthesis through a multiplicity of processes is also explored by Alexandre Nasr, who calls for a shift away from the simplistic binary of Christian and Muslim when discussing Lebanese identity – rather, a nexus of forces such as kin relations, the state, and historical discourse interact to produce 'torn' identities. Jeremy Withers, in his piece on the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis, is similarly cautious of stark religious binaries. He considers why the controversy was viewed by many as incontrovertible evidence of the inherent incompatibility of Western culture with the Islamic Other, and how Muslim communities have contested this Orientalist narrative. Finally, Sasha Flatau appraises classic anthropological theories of ritual by discussing her very own rite of passage amongst the Maya of Tzajala. Here we see how identity is not only constituted at the grand level of the community, but is also inscribed through the body.

Collectively, these articles examine issues of religious and secular identity in the context of contemporary global-political structures and the myriad rituals that are used to address them.

– Emily Saras & Rahul Rose

Symbolism of a Sweat Lodge

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San Cristobal de las Casas, in Chiapas, Mexico, is full of bars, hostels, restaurants and shops, populated with locals and foreigners dressed in jeans, and there are cars on the road. But only a short distance from this city are Maya villages where a much more traditional way of life continues to unfold.

In the village of Tzajala, I was invited to join a spiritual cleansing ritual that began when the village leader blew through a conch to gather us all. In terms of the liminal process (Van Gennep 1960, cited in Turner 1969: 80) I started in the pre-liminal stage: I was unsure of what was about to happen and didn't yet know the villagers I'd joined. A vase of pink roses and white lilies was placed next to the bonfire around which we stood, as an offering to the earth. The leader talked us through the ritual (for the benefit of those of us who were not already well acquainted with proceedings), and then he began to chant. He filled the conch with ash from the fire and walked around the circle holding it beneath each persons face. One by one, we washed our face and hair with the smoke and said, "*Aho*" (welcome). When this was done we saluted each direction, the sky, and the earth with our hands held high as the leader chanted, and we touched our heads to the ground to salute Mother Earth.

Once this preparation was over, we lined up to enter the *temazcal* (a low circular stone wall covered by canvas) which, due to its small, low entrance designed to crawl through, is symbolic of re-entering the womb. Before doing so, we pressed our foreheads to the earth and said, "Aho, Temazcal" and, once inside, the liminal period ensued.

There was a pit in the centre of the temazcal. Once everyone was positioned around it, this pit was filled with hot stones, over which water was poured, creating a sweat lodge effect. According to Groark (2005), the main function of these sweat-lodges is to "warm the flesh and the blood", as warmth is symbolic of health, power and life. By sitting in the *temazcal,* we were expelling the cold from our bodies which is symbolic of ill health and death. We were all sitting in the pitch black whilst the leader chanted and sang. The songs were based on call and response, with strong symbolic associations with Mother Earth and nature. Everyone participated either by singing or playing an instrument – drums, wooden flutes, or claves.

The *temazcal* episode lasted around two hours, during which time we were not allowed to drink. Sometimes the students would struggle with breathing – my friend, for example, had a panic attack – but the group supported them by giving them claves to play for distraction and by telling them it was just the bad spirits leaving their body. When the heat and steam were visibly affecting members of the group, someone would cry "*¡Fuerza!*" (strength) and everyone would punch their fist in the air and scream "*¡Fuerza!*" in response.

> *rituals such as temazcal are a symbol of the unifying factors that bring the community together*

To mark the end of the ritual, we crawled out of the *temazcal* one by one, and, before leaving, pressed our head to the earth and called out, "*Aho*, temazcal" one last time. Evidently, we had been re-born or had re-entered into the world after the incredible experience of reflection and endurance within the *temazcal.* As people crawled out of the sweat lodge, others embraced them and together we jumped into the icy river that ran alongside the village to cool off. This was the post-liminal period that closed the process, uniting us all with strong bonds of shared experience. Once the ritual was over, I experienced a strong ritualistic feeling and felt a lot closer to those I'd met in Tzajala village.

For the Maya of Tzajala, rituals such as *temazcal* are a symbol of the unifying factors that bring the community together. Victor Turner (1969) refers to this as com-

Fig #04

munitas (82): by going through the liminal process, the group is brought together and members are given a shared or common identity. This theory, as well as Durkheim's (1968) concept of the effervescent ritual, symbolising social transcendence and group solidarity, is surprisingly well illustrated by the modern day *temazcal*. As well as bringing the community together, rituals like those performed by the Maya of Tzajala are thought by participants to uphold the traditions of their ancestors and, in so doing, represent a formula for living well.

The classic anthropological theories of ritual were built from similar experiences, and contemporary anthropology shows that such practices are still alive and well today. Since those theories were formulated, new kinds of ritual have been observed in many parts of the world, destabilising their famous frameworks. Yet my experience suggests that we should not discard such theories out of hand, but rework them to fit appropriate contexts. In explaining why Durkheim and Turner's ideas work better in some rituals and not others, we may be able to establish a more precise notion of what constitutes ritual behaviour, and determine whether such a term is in fact universally valid.

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Fig #04 -- Photography by John Wallis

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Religion and Identity among Christian Lebanese: the Myth of the Cedar Revolution

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The problem of Lebanese identity has long been treated in anthropology and ethnographic discourse. I want to examine in this article the pattern of shifting identities in Lebanon since the 1990s and how this has affected Christian communities throughout the country. People have commonly identified "the Lebanese problem" as a purely religious matter, but I will attempt here to define a different pattern which has emerged since 2005. In this article I want to explore the ambiguous relationships which shape the Christian Lebanese community and its relationships with other religious sects, the Lebanese state, and national identity.

History

Lebanon is officially constituted of eighteen religious communities, among them Muslim Sunnis, Shias, Maronites, Orthodox Christians, and Druze. Lebanon was primarily built as a Christian country, but since then the Christian community has become more and more marginalised. We define identity here as "used by lay actors in everyday settings to make sense of themselves or their activities, what they share with and how they differ from others" (Brubaker and Cooper 2005: 4). I aim to examine how the perspective of the Christian community in Lebanon has evolved since the Taif Agreement (1989), which proclaimed for the first time that "Lebanon is Arab in belonging and identity", and more importantly since the 2005 Cedar Revolution that saw cross-sectarian protests against Syrian involvement. I will argue here that instead of bringing the Lebanese together within a cross-sectarian identity, the Cedar Revolution has brought new forms of division, along different sectarian, social and political faultlines.

> **to rebuild the ruins of Beirut is to rebuild the Lebanese national identity**

A friend of mine recently remarked that the possibility of being a Maronite Christian in Lebanon had all but disappeared; today, there are only Maronites Sunnis or Maronite Shias. In ethnography written before the 1975-1990 civil wars, the Christian viewpoint was described as being "for the separation of predominantly Christian Mount Lebanon from the remaining parts of Lebanon, and the subsequent creation of an autonomous, Western-inspired, Western-supported and Christian-dominated state"(Entelis 1974: 39). However, since Lebanon has started to define itself as an Arab state, the position of Christian Lebanese has progressively fragmented between pro-Sunni movements (including Phalangists, Lebanese Forces, and National Liberal Party) and pro-Shia movements (such as General Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement).

Kesrouan, a district of Mount Lebanon, has the highest density of Christians in Lebanon. Its deputy is Michel Aoun, a pro-Shia Christian general. But within the region itself, the presence of the Phalangist Party (Al Kata'ib), a now pro-Sunni traditional nationalist Christian party, remains particularly strong. Affiliation to a certain party in the region is not necessarily reflective of a particular ideological position; it is more the consequence of issues of kinship or economics. The quintessential embodiment of this within Lebanese society is the *Zaim*, or Lebanese feudal lord, still present in the leadership of many political parties. Even though Lebanon has seen

the emergence of new types of self-made politicians, most voters (especially in the countryside and the mountains) continue to vote according to the prestige and the aid given to the community by the family of the candidate. Such notions represent a form of Lebanese cultural resistance to Western-style democracy.

Joseph has stated that "Lebanese are embedded in extended kinship relations – legally, politically, socially, economically, and religiously" (2000: 134). The establishment of religious family law as state law continues to have deep consequences, visible in the interaction between communities today. The absence of a family law common to all Lebanese people has created a sectarian vacuum. Again, sectarian family law does not only concern itself with a Muslim/Christian division, but also concerns the relations between Greek Orthodox and Maronites, Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, and so on. Religious clerics often prevent intercommunity marriage in order to preserve cohesion and order within their religious and kinship group. The fragmentation of Lebanese society into different sects is then reinforced by the law of the state.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon
The recent debate in Lebanon about the role of the US-backed Special Tribunal on the assassination of former Sunni Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 has had a particular significance within this context. The assassination led to protests, now known as the Cedar Revolution, calling for the end of Syrian involvement. The extent to which this Revolution was actually both a

social and political revolution is debatable. It created a new form of sectarian division, not based on traditional divisions between Christians and Muslims. Hariri had been the leader of the Sunni community, a successful pro-Western businessman linked to the Saudi regime. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon is important both in terms of Western influence on Lebanon, and for the Sunni/Shia relationships within the country itself. The events following the Cedar Revolution and the instauration of the Special Tribunal have reshaped the sectarian divisions in these new terms. Unlike the situation of marginalised Copts in Egypt and other Christians in the Middle East, Christians here are integrated into the political arena.

the problem of Christian identity is inherent to the problem of a national identity

The Phoenician Identity and its remodeling through time
One of the traditional arguments for a separate identity, still present within the Lebanese Christian community, and especially in its diaspora, is the direct inheritance by this population of "the Phoeni-

cian gene", which is felt to underlie the cultural specificity of the Lebanese nation. Christians saw themselves as democratic and open-minded travellers, akin to the Phoenicians of ancient times. Most artists and writers who referred to these notions were Christians. Poets like Said Aql in the 1960s considered the creation of a Lebanese language to be closer to Phoenician and Aramaic roots than to Arabic. He created a newspaper called *Merkhart* (a Carthaginian king) and militated for a culturally isolated Lebanon, removed from the pan-Arabic world.

As Asher Kaufman (2004) emphasises, what is most striking is that the notion of a Phonecian gene itself did not entirely disappear, but was appropriated by the Sunni and the Shia after the Civil War. Rafik Hariri, the Sunni Prime Minister, decided to call the project of rebuilding the Shia suburbs of Beirut after a Phoenician queen. The name of the project, "Beirut, the Ancient City of the Future", also deeply emphasised the Phoenician roots of the city and Lebanon in general. The symbolic value of this idea is evident: to rebuild the ruins of Beirut is to rebuild the Lebanese national identity, into which the notion of Phoenician identity has been integrated. The myth of the reconstruction of national identity supposedly culminated in the outbreak of the Cedar Revolution, only to be erased in the subsequent year by new forms of cultural, political and social divisions.

The situation of Christians, torn between different identities and shaped by exterior notions and factors, is indicative of the situation of Lebanon itself. The study of their identity contributes to more general debate on the situation of minorities in the Middle East, which goes beyond a simple opposition between Muslim and Christians. This division, this form of torn identity, is common to all the sects in Lebanon. The problem of Christian identity is inherent to the problem of a national identity, still not yet solved. In the context of Arab democratic revolutions, the minority issue in the world's most ethnically and religiously divided area will be of great concern in coming decades.

Fig #05 - La Vierge Marie, religious icons in the region of Mount Lebanon

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Fig #05 - Photography by Alexandre Nasr

What's In A Name Imposed?
Inheritance, Naming and Indigenous Identification in Ecuador's 2010 Census

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There are conflicting views in Ecuador about the purpose of the 2010 National Census. Irrespective of any outcomes and before any information has been gathered, its questions are already stirring people to reflect on some of their ancestors' decisions, and to discuss afresh matters of self-identity[1]. In part, this is articulated through the use and meaning of names, and difficulties encountered with their changing import and influence – concerns which have echoes in the work of anthropology. Veber (2003) warns academics to distrust terms and labels 'inherited from previous scholarly generations' being used to 'describe and analyse social phenomena' (203), laden as they are with linguistic baggage and uncontrollable or unintended associations. What emerges from the lived-in moments retold below, however, is more than a parallel to academic pains over the 'naming effects' of inherited terminology: it is a narrative of contemporary indigenous groups renegotiating and redefining how they see themselves, and how they wish to be seen.

There is a meeting. Benches are placed at one end of a communal tree-nursery greenhouse. The walls are plastic. Two dogs crack bones discarded from the shared meal in their teeth. Above, two bare light bulbs, blindingly bright. Attending, ten or so elected representatives from the 65 families that make up this registered indigenous community in Ecuador's tropical Andes[2]. The capital Quito is less than an hour away by bus. The order of business is negotiated in Spanish. The jokes too. In a few days' time there will be a national census, lasting a week. The government's instruction is: "*¡autoidentifícate!*"

how can one be definitive in confirming one's own identity from the government's list of options?

Officially, this is to encourage people who consider themselves part of Ecuador's '14 Nationalities and 18 Pueblos'[3] to formally affirm their identity. The affirmation must be made according to the given framework, in order to strengthen each person's position in making applications under recently re-drawn allocations of collective rights – part of 2008's reformulated Constitution. As elsewhere in the Andes, this is something of a double-edged 'quest for definition' (Barragán 2008: 42, discussing rural populations in Bolivia) since government and populace can draw different conclusions from the results. On the one hand, identification with recognised groups serves to reinforce common histories and requirements, and to foster unity around shared goals and concerns, where this 'act of naming... creates subjects with demands [in common] and lines of action to pursue' (ibid.). On the other hand, this identification also involves enforcing categories which 'carry the burden of history and of exclusions' (ibid.) and which embody the processes of marginalisation experienced by previous generations.

It has been observed that Ecuador is not alone in having a legal system which all-too-often reflects its colonial origins by prioritising the demands of 'neo-colonial institutions' (D'Souza 2007: 19), such as North American mining companies, over the claims to territory and inherited lands of indigenous populations, with fierce subsequent legal battles. From the perspective of indigenous groups, the spectrum of hostile-sympathetic government policies in Ecuador is further complicated by the recent history of frequent political change (seven presidents in the last fifteen years). This has included an apparently increasing centralisation of power – with less dialogue engaging indigenous groups – under current president Rafael Correa (de la Torre 2010). One response to this at the national level has been to renew the ongoing political influence of Ecuador's indigenous uprising of the 1990s, echoing claims then that successful political protests were (and continue to be) conducted in a "particular indigenous way... using collective labour to provide for the material needs of the participants, and combining the domestic tasks of childcare with the political necessities of the struggle at hand" (Weismantel & Eisenman 1998: 136; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). Thus, changing relations with the state have seen shifts both in a sense of pride placed in indigenous identity and in levels of political engagement among Ecuador's indigenous populations, one result of which was the widespread resistance among these groups reported during the last census in 2001 (García 2010).

Here and now in the Comuna, however, there seems to be a general willingness to participate in the census procedure, although there is still a degree of reservation about the government's motives. The perceived 'threat', for some, is that 'insufficient' numbers of indigenous people will be 'counted' and, as such, communities that currently enjoy a degree of autonomy in some decision-making processes (such as land-use and distribution) will lose their communal rights. This was put by one representative at the weekly community meeting in the form of fear of a new law: the suspicion that 'they' (the government) want this information to facilitate the introduction of "another law on how we [legally-recognised communities] operate... one that will control us more... the more information they have, the more they can control[4]".

Others at the meeting were less obviously concerned. Laughter rippled round

the room – the answer being apparently self-evident from the question – when it emerged another forthcoming Census marker will be, "What language/s do you speak?" For some, shrugs accompanied frustrated, heckled comments on the topic of isolating one's own, singular, formal identity: "I don't know... I don't care!" ... "I'm Peruvian!". The opposing view was very clearly stated, however, not least by the current Community President: "This is all very important... why is it that after the last [Census] only six percent of Quito, of Pichincha province, said they were Indigenous? It's more than that... and they need to know it... because the more recognition, the more chance of getting what we're entitled to... and keeping it, too".

there seems to be a general willingness to participate in the census procedure, although there is still a degree of reservation about the government's motives

Some people had another query: how can one be definitive in confirming one's own identity from the government's list of options? What if our ancestors moved around the country? What if we are Indig-

enous, but our parents come from different pueblos – does that make us another kind of mestizo[5]? Very quickly, a vocal participant in the evening's discussions proffered an answer: "There are some cases where it is clear: Gomez, Gonzalez... these are Latin – Spanish – names, these are not our names... they're not Indigenous". This statement began a debate rather than closing it: "What about in cases like with my niece? One of her surnames[6] is Gomez, but she's nothing of a mestizo!" No advice was offered in response to the woman raising this point, instead the reply was explanatory: "That's because some time ago many indigenous people took – because they had to – the surname of whoever they were working for... in order to regain their freedom, to farm their own land... and these names, these imposed names, stayed with them... and now, they are with us". The confusion gradually dissolved, though only as matters returned to the meeting's agenda, to more familiar territory. The question of how to balance names and identities still hung in the air, however, and remained unanswered.

On the walk home my compañero added something he'd kept to himself in the meeting, for fear that the conversation might never draw to a close: "What he didn't say to us was also that, in the past, people have opted to take a Spanish surname... because they wanted to... they could take one from the owner of their hacienda where they worked, or from somewhere else – often this was important for people to do... if they were facing difficulty with jobs, and with schools... there was,

Fig #06

and is, a lot of discrimination… changing a name could change that: changing their name could help them". With this he folded another layer of complexity over countless others that arise from centuries of oppression and changing forms of governance and popular control, felt most acutely by the nation's marginalised indigenous peoples.

the voice of that vast historical web of familial relations, the tissue that feeds into people's self-image and sense of identity, continues to talk to us

The picture, then, involves both an internal and an external view: how indigenous communities might see themselves, and how they wish to be seen. The very design and implementation of a census, however, means the populace is generally excluded from its operation and direction (cf. Cohn 1987), and so in this context there is little scope to control 'how we wish to be seen' – it is rather a question of 'how we are seen'. The external view creates another historical juncture, which condenses previous historical complexities from 'before' into the latest statistical information to be used henceforth ('after'). The internal view, meanwhile, acknowledges both these intricacies and the ever-shifting political context, where a sense of identity survives both 'past inheritance' and any 'recent acquisitions' (Cohn 1987: 227). In its reliance on names and terms, the census and its data thus come dangerously close to falling into the trap that Veber (2003) urges social scientists to avoid, where the misapplication of inherited terminology leads to inappropriate or unintended conclusions.

Ticking a box will in some ways be drawing a line under inherited names – greasing the cogs of policy perhaps – and yet the voice of that vast historical web of familial relations, the tissue that feeds into people's self-image and sense of identity, continues to talk to us, as loudly as ever. Stepping out of the greenhouse I noticed the dogs had finished chewing, but the bones remained.

Fig #07

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Footnotes:

1 Preliminary results have since been published on 27/01/11, as at: http://www.inec.gob.ec/preliminares/somos.html - accessed 13/02/11.

2 I'm attending a weekly gathering of the 'community council' with my compañero, Rogelio, whilst living in an outbuilding at the bottom of his family's garden: I'm part-way through a 14-month stint of fieldwork looking at collective action and ecological justice in highland Ecuador.

3 The options provided in the Census materials are listed as: Nationalities – Achuar, Awa, Cofan, Chachi, Epera, Waorani, Kichwa, Secoya, Shuar, Siona, Tsa'chila, Shiwiar, Zapara, Andoa; and Pueblos: Pastos, Natabuela, Otavalo, Karanki, Kayambi, Kitukara, Panzaleo, Chibuleo, Salasaka, Kisapincha, Tomabela, Waranka, Puruhá, Kañari, Saraguro, Paltas, Manta, Huancavilca.

4 All live (non-textual) quotations come from the one meeting, held on 22/11/10, part of my ongoing participation in life in the comuna.

5 Currently, the majority population group within Ecuador is mestizo, generally translated as 'of mixed descent', identifying both Indigenous and 'white' or 'Spanish' ancestors.

6 Maternal or Paternal surnames – both can be used in official documents and naming formalities.

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Fig #06 & 07 - Photography by Tristan Partridge

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Clashing or Bashing?
Power, Representation, and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis

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On September 30, 2005, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published twelve political cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The images quickly provoked a vehement national controversy, and by early 2006 protests escalated worldwide as the cartoons were re-printed throughout Europe. The torching of Danish embassies in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, over 100 protester deaths and various death threats saturated the media coverage. Reports on these and other reactions by an enraged "Muslim world" seemed to multiply as quickly as editorials and blogs discussing Muslim intolerance and anachronism. In so doing, the "Muhammad cartoon crisis" appeared to call attention to an underlying, fundamental incompatibility of Islamic traditions and liberal democratic society. While much scholarly work suggests otherwise, I remain more interested in why analyses of this event so frequently fell into discussions of "culture clash". I want to ask how the Muhammad cartoon crisis has played into a longstanding, power-laden Orientalist discourse of Western incompatibility with the Muslim Other. And how has this narrative been contested by Muslim communities?

The cartoon crisis was promulgated by a challenge to the Association of Danish Cartoonists posed by Flemming Rose, the Culture Editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, "to draw Muhammad as you see him" (2006: 2). Twelve cartoons were supplied and published, whose themes ranged from images of a nondescript bearded man in the desert, to conflations of Islam with terrorism and female oppression, to a smirking young student who has written on a chalkboard in Arabic, "The journalists of *Jyllands-Posten* are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs". The most overtly offensive cartoon is one of the prophet standing on a cloud shouting to a line of approaching suicide bombers, "Stop, stop, we ran out of virgins". Another depicts two terrified women in burkas and an aggressive Muhammad holding them back, knife in hand. By gazing into the eyes of these oppressed and powerless women, the intended audience constitutes themselves as the opposite: a modern, Western, potential savior. Interestingly, the dangerous prophet's eyes are blocked by a black strip, possibly implying criminality or a gaze that is beyond interpretation or dialogue.

> *many reports stressed the incapability of disgruntled Muslims to respect or even understand a number of Enlightenment pillars*

The image that perhaps sparked the most controversy was a wild-eyed, aggressive bearded man wearing a turban in the shape of a bomb with a lit fuse. Inscribed in Arabic at the centre of the bomb-turban is an Islamic testimony of faith. The image is well-summarised by Kuipers: "[A] fanaticized face, an inscription that is illegible to the intended audience, and a non-communicative attitude on behalf of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, who are depicted as focused on destruction instead of dialogue"(2008: 2). The offending cartoons replaced the intersecting complexities of many local situations with an essentialised image of Islamic aggression. What remains is a seemingly natural, in situ Muslim icon.

Contextualising the Cartoons

"What is perceived as Muslim intolerance has become a foil against which Europeans increasingly assert the notion of European culture" (Henkel 2006)

Although prohibition of visual representations of the prophet is a central tenet of Sunni Islam, and often inflammatory to Shi'a sensibilities, the Muhammad cartoons were offensive to many Muslims communities not simply because of their depiction of the prophet, but also for the cartoons' subtexts. Flemming Rose asserts that he commissioned the Muhammad cartoons "in response to several incidents of self-censorship in Europe caused by widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam" (2006: 1). Concern over ostensibly limited European representations of Muhammad stems from wider fears of "Islam" as a dangerous encroaching force going unchecked and uncritiqued. Recent scholarship has pointed to Denmark's development of attitudes that are "essentially anti-Muslim and anti-refugee" (Wren 2001: 141). I suggest that the fundamental reason that these particular images exploded is because they provided a a symbol for concern over "Islam's relation to the West". The cartoons which caused the most controversy were those which suggested a violent, unbridgeable Islamic fundamentalism. They provided predictable forms of Otherness that sparked debate over the truthfulness of such representation.

The "Muhammad cartoons" must be placed within a post-9/11 context of creeping European and North American xenophobia, particularly Islamophobia,

dialectically connected to culture clash theory. As Edward Said has extensively documented in his canonical Orientalism (1978), there is a long history of resorting to "us and them" constructs in addressing Middle Eastern cultures. The tendency of those invoking clash theory to homogenise the experiences and beliefs of the "Muslim world" must be understood as a legacy of this longstanding project of Orientalism. How, then, was the cartoon crisis represented in ways that fit into the binaries and metonymic chains that empower Orientalism?

Power, Representation, and the Construction of Difference
Underlying much of the commentary on Muslim outcry against the publication and republication of the Muhammad cartoons was a discussion of how this crisis related to questions of modernity. Many reports stressed the incapability of disgruntled Muslims to respect or even understand a number of Enlightenment pillars. Commentary often revolved around their disdain for free speech, unwillingness to "take a joke", and inability to control their flaring emotions. These characteristics – antithetical to modern liberal democracies – marked Muslims as both anachronistic and qualitatively different from their European counterparts. Such accounts depend on Muslim outcry being represented as singular, united by a disavowal of the right to free speech. Commentary on the event tends to essentialise the voice of protesters worldwide, often asserting the singular experience of the wider "Islamic world". Said (1978: 208) explains that the homogenisation of different Muslim responses animates Orientalist assumptions. Excluding those positioning themselves somewhere in between, Otherness appears distinct, comprehensive and natural.

In the aftermath of the Muhammad cartoon crisis, Western attempts to calm "angry Muslims" with arguments concerning free speech were generally unsuccessful, and governments largely failed to convey that they did not control what was published in the popular media. In this context, Muslims were represented as having little to no emotional control. A particularly vivid account describes how "[a] violent crowd of about 50,000 demonstrators supposedly 'wrapped a copy of a Danish flag around a donkey – regarded as a symbol of stupidity – and hoisted it as the crowd jeered'" (Muller et al 2007: 2). Depictions of Muslims' unrestrained, seemingly irrational behavior mark another stark contrast to "our" Enlightenment principle of placing rationality

before "emotionalism". In his February 2006 reflection, "Why I Published Those Cartoons", Flemming Rose asserts the "positive effects" of his editorial: "[T]he integration of Muslims into European societies has been sped up by 300 years due to the cartoons; perhaps we do not need to fight the battle for the Enlightenment all over again in Europe" (3). The editor assumes the ability of "Muslims" – portrayed as a complete and ignorant whole – to integrate into European societies and "catch up" to an enlightened modernity, a process that would have ostensibly taken 300 years at least, is dependent on their being taught (presumably by Flemming Rose) its central tenets.

the editor assumes the ignorant "Muslim" community can and should integrate into European societies by "catching up" to an enlightened modernity

Speaking Back
A number of well-publicised and variously positioned Muslim rebuttals emerged in the aftermath of the cartoon crisis, which subverted or reinforced polarising Orientalist discourse and clash theory to differing extents.

An initiative launched by the German Central Council of Muslims in August 2008 provided an interesting attempt to undermine the Orientalist assumptions that the cartoon crisis strengthened. The contest invited Muslims to submit videos representing their funniest Islam-related experience. In so doing, the organisers simultaneously reflected on and subverted popular conceptions of Muslims as "serious and grim". By contrast to the Muhammad cartoons' tendency to incite one group to laugh at another, this contest promoted a post-colonial prospect: laughing together. Calling the bluff of commentators invested in clash theory, through the very medium that sparked the commentary, affords a powerful critique.

A quite different take on laughing back can be found in the Iranian newspaper Hamshahri''s contest to draw the best "holocaust related cartoon". The contest attempted to re-appropriate the mode of

the political cartoon to prove that Western societies have their own topics which remain off-limits to laughter (Hanafi 2009: 144). Though the contest received much attention in Europe and North America – on a challenge, the winning cartoon was even published in *Jyllands-Posten* – it caused more antipathy than consilience.

just as various Muslim communities are developing projects to subvert links of this metonymic chain, so must the Western public

Others have taken a more moderate approach, most notably the celebrity intellectual Tariq Ramadan, who strategically seeks to distill the many causes of offence into underlying differences between European and Muslim sensibilities. He points out that it is against Islamic principles, unlike Christian ones, to represent images of prophets. But more importantly, Islamic tradition does not have the same European convention of satire, irony and blasphemy which allows for the concept of laughing at religion (Kuipers 2008: 8-9). From here, Ramadan offers an olive branch, suggesting that education and dialogue can come from both "sides" so as to engender amiable coexistence.

Conclusion
[I]f there is a clash, it is between empire builders on the one hand and those who believe in dialogue on the other (Hanafi 2009: 140)

Subsumed within the context of the cartoon crisis, the paradigmatic "us and them" model takes the form of a metonymic chain that includes "free speech vs intolerance", "rational vs emotional", "modern vs anachronistic", and "good vs evil". That such a sequence appears a natural point of entry into the issue for so many commentators points to the increasing success of Orientalist constructions to be seen as truth – to attain hegemony. Just as various Muslim communities are developing projects to subvert links of this metonymic chain, so must the Western public and the academy. The ability of future scholarship to create dialogue within

and between global communities will depend on projects engaging in collaborative representations, embracing hybridity, and ensuring continued reflexivity. Such projects will provide a powerful challenge to those engaged in polarising Orientalist and clash theories. The discursive polarisation of what are perceived as "Western" and "Islamic" communities has been constructed through Orientalist tools.
As Lorde observes, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1980: 6). Both communities must search beyond the present hegemonic lexicon for a new conciliatory meeting.

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Nepalese Days

The very word "text", its Latin origins referring to a fabric of interwoven strands, provides a suitable metaphor to describe a particular, if not exclusive, feature of (ethnographic) writing. Just as interactions between people are multi-dimensional – sensual, cognitive, and semiotic – the crafting of these experiences into words echoes such diverse enmeshments. In the following article, I have attempted to explore the ways I could represent my interactions during two months spent in a secondary boarding school in Kathmandu, Nepal, between July and October 2010. It plays with, rather than adheres to, any of the styles typically associated with ethnographic representation, philosophical contemplation, or reflexive fiction, and therefore might be seen as an experiment in textual travel.

Peace is not the absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice. Spinoza (1670: Section 19, Chapter 2)

5.30 am. Calling shouts, stomping feet of different sizes, and the slapping of sandals wake me up. It's time for Yoga in the upstairs prayer room; the smell of Nag Champa incense sticks mixes with the fumes from the trucks outside. Ghanshyam Yogi, the smiling teacher, sits cross-legged and patient in front of 14

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yawning kids. Yog stands for 'connection', a connection with your inner self and the transcendent being (Brahma) of which your spirit is an incarnation. We practise thus not just our muscles, but also our awareness of being an embodiment of that principle creator of the universe. For an hour, we stretch, hum, breathe, laugh and greet the sun. Repeatedly, Ghanshyam reminds us that every breath is an individual incarnation in itself. The regular and deliberate act of respiration is of utmost importance for a conscious awareness of yourself, Brahma, and Brahma in you. We end in a meditative moment guided by a thrice chanted Om and Shanti (Peace). Before we re-direct our senses to the outer world and a new day, we turn inwards one last time, in a minute of silence. A minute that extends, as every breathing body in the room travels into their own moment of contemplation.

It is notable that three conceptual words reverberate in conversations, posters or songs: Om, Peace/Unity (Shanti) and Being (Brahma). Om, to start with, is the primor-

Fig #08

dial sound of the Hindu Cosmology. It is the sound of the first 'Big Bang', of planets travelling through the Universe and of the basic vowels that resonate in your body as you pronounce them. Om is sung in meditation, a name for respected people, (as seen on walls and paintings) – a symbol of archetypical, harmonious unity.

peace and power is not to be sought in the absence of war or the exposition of force, but in a condition of being.

Peace, referring to Spinoza's quote, is the inspiring idea that guides Hindu Vidya Peeth (HVP), the non-profit school I worked in between August and October 2010. Dr Chintamani Yogi, one of the founders of the school and principal of HVP Kathmandu, takes every chance – on the rooftop after dinner, at breakfast or in a brief chat in the hallway – to explain. For a nation like Nepal, which, though never under foreign rule, is landlocked between two politically, economically, and culturally dominant nations (China to the North, India to the South, East and West), the maintenance of inner peace and stability is fundamental. Even more so considering the country's current political division between militant Maoists, Marxist-Leninists and the National Congress ("Democrats"). Only recently was the political quest for 'official' leadership concluded after the turbulent election of the 34th Prime Minister of Nepal, the Marxist-Leninist Jhalanath Khanal – following eight unsuccessful electoral rounds.

Peace, as Dr Yogi points out, is a process that starts within the individual. As all beings are incarnations of Brahma (creator of the Universe), all are brothers and sisters to each other, connected by a transcendent fictive-kinship bond. This appreciation of spiritual equality and connection both guides the pedagogic approach of his school and marks my encounters with the students, teachers and Vishnu Dangi, HVP Kathmandu's Vice-Principal. It also helped me to understand how Yoga is not just physical exercise, and peace not just absence of war, but both are practices in and conditions of a particular awareness and attitude.

5.15 pm. Prayer Time/Moral Class. Half a busy day has passed. The children assemble in the prayer room. Dr Yogi recounts and chants mantras from the Baghdava Gita (the foundational scripture of Hindu Prayers). He begins a tune and the Madal hand drums begin; kids sing along and come up with their own lyrics. As some remember words, they hum to themselves later or scribble lyrics into diaries. The themes manifest themselves differently – painted on the walls, chalked on the boards in class. I think of Karin Barber's *Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* (2007: 213); "[m]emoirs and diaries could stand in for bricks and mortar". Indeed, the songs echo within the concrete skeleton of the school and enliven it; the sound strengths bonds and emphasises communality. I listen to a student as he translates a song and drift off into daydreams.

Being. According to the Hindu concepts taught in the school, there are three divine forces constituting all matter and experience of this universe. There is a Creator (Brahma), a Sustainer (Vishnu), and a Destroyer, or Renewer (Shiva). The notions of being and nothingness (no-thing-ness) are present, in words, scriptures and practices. After Yoga at seven in the morning, after classes around three in the afternoon, or after dinner at 9, I would regularly sit on the rooftop terrace, facing northwest towards the silhouettes of the Himalayas and read a compilation of essays by Jean-Paul Sartre.

The contrast between Sartre's existentialist perceptions of being and the transcendental stance of the Hindu conception evoked stimulating discussions between Dr Yogi, Vishnu Sir and I. I listen to ideas about incarnation, the spiritual principle that we inherit and the awareness of it that we can raise. We are born with a part of the creating Spirit, Brahma, Vishnu tells me. We strive to become aware of that fact by working on ourselves, raising the form and level of our internalised spirit. Sartre's thoughts rest textualised in front of me and suggest quite a different view. Born into the world – abandoned in the world, as Martin Heidegger (1978 [1927]: 322) put it – we are beings without an a priori essence. No escapist, reassuring recourse to a divine principle can change this. The only principle by which we can construct ourselves is freedom, based on the contingency of both phenomenal facts and consciousness. I wonder whether these two antipodal notions we juggle are reconcilable. Do they both not suggest a cura sui, a disciplining of the self leading to the construction of a conscious condi-

tion of being? I ponder over the control of breath in the prayer room, the responsibility for oneself and others that Dr Yogi recognises as the principle of being. And I consider the absolute responsibility for one's own being, the consequence Sartre sees in the existential realisation of pure freedom. I also think of Vishnu, who sits on my right.

The first time Vishnu saw a doctor was when he turned 30. He suffered from an untreated infection in his left leg, leaving it largely immobile. Nevertheless, Vishnu – the Sustainer – is seemingly the strongest person in the school. His happiness and motivation, despite his physical handicap, appear as the personified fate of many I conversed with. Despite the suffering, the poverty, the precarious food and housing conditions, despite the fact that right next to the school a dozen construction workers sleep under wooden sheds, I get a sense of order and enthusiasm from this world. Peace and power are not to be sought in the absence of war or the exposition of force, but in a condition of being.

These conditions of being, these attitudes and imaginations I encountered in Kathmandu, have sincerely affected my own perception of being and nothingness. Sartre (2003: 18) writes in the similarly entitled book that being and not nothingness is what profoundly characterises the condition humaine. This is the notion of contingency; all could be different. I could have been born in Nepal, working on that construction site. Instead, I have come from another place, halfway around the world to teach. Really? To Teach? The smiles, the advice ("Time and patience are the best medicine", says Vishnu) the song sung by the children in class inspired and strengthened me. I have left, realising that I have mainly been taught – about Om, Peace and Being, about Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, about being and nothingness, the birth and the dissolution of life.

I could have been born in Nepal, working on that construction site. Instead, I have come from another place, halfway around the world to teach

Dissolution into nothing. I remember that late evening twilight on the steps by the holy river Bagmati, regarding the crematory ceremony performed in the Pashupatinath temple on the other side of the river. Why did they circulate around the enflamed pile of logs, carrying with them the linen-wrapped bodies of the deceased and the burning incense sticks, exactly three times? Think of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Dr Yogi suggests later. Every being is created, lives and dies. The circle of life. These three stages or concepts from being to nothingness are present in gestures, actions, and processes. As Hindu principles, they are internalised as attitudes, and externalised in practices.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. Vishnu has been standing behind me while I write these lines. He takes me from the echoing daydream back into the rooftop reality. It rains, the cold wind blows through my pages. Vishnu smiles and hands me a Nepali tea – I sense condensed milk and spoonfuls of sugar. Vishnu – the Sustainer. I nod and he sits down next to me. Another day has passed, he says.

10 pm. 'Click.' The lights go off – power cut! Silence and Darkness. Excited screams from the children's rooms, annoyed mumbling from a teacher's. I stroll along the drying clothes hung up in lines on the rooftop. Far in the western part of the valley, from up there on the fourth floor, one can recognise the Stupa on Swayambunath, the "monkey temple", which is brightly lit in the dark of the night. Candles and fires around the hilltop reflect on the gilded layers of paint covering the Buddhist monuments. We simply stand on the roof, watching the light in the dark. In the calm of the moment, we appreciate the preciousness of such calm moments that suspend the constant buzzing of the busy quotidian routine. Kathmandu halts and contemplates light and darkness, loudness and silence, being and nothingness. Another Click. Power is back. Relieved sighs. Some go back into the rooms. Vishnu stays as we watch the beauty of the enlightened Buddha temple disappear into the sea of flaring city lights.

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Figs #08-14 - Photography by Jonas L. Tinius from his fieldwork in Nepal

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Papier-mâché mask-making in the Shanti Sewa Ashram for an afternoon homework class

Differently kept shoes
outside the prayer, yoga
and homework room

Vishnu's daugher Nabu
playing with the water
on the rooftop-terrace

Younger children curi-
ously peering into the
classroom in their break

View North from the
rooftop-terrace onto
the neighbouring work-
ers' housings

Politics, Development & Globalisation

The study of political structures and hierarchies represents a traditional backbone of anthropological theorising. The rise of development as a distinct practice over the twentieth century brought it into a complex and twisted relationship with anthropology, its "evil twin" (Ferguson 1997). And it is all but impossible for anthropologists to avoid discussing the concept of globalisation in the contemporary world. The great visibility of these three terms: Politics, Development and Globalisation across the submissions to Imponderabilia this year reflects their centrality to social anthropology as it is practiced today.

In this section, Diana Julià Llobet explores the idea of building a state from exile, focusing on the case of nomadic Saharawis in the deserts of Algeria. By contrast, John Wallis examines the inner workings of the 2008 Obama Campaign as a highly unconventional electoral movement conducted within the confines of a conventional nation-state system. Michael Philo examines the potential of British football to act as an unexpectedly powerful unifier against the pervasive divisiveness of tribal affiliation in Kenya. Finally, Adam Payne considers the discourse of "ecological crisis" and its effects on the global economy.

Collectively, the articles presented in this section not only suggest the centrality of the concepts of politics, development and globalisation to the world today, but also highlight the sensitivity and caution with which anthropologists must approach them.

– Burcu Ozelik & Rachael Petersen

The Saharawi Narrative of Resilience: Creating a State in Exile

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The contemporary restructuring of the global order has taken place in an era defined by fast-paced economic globalisation, creating a social and cultural urgency within the field of anthropology to construct new paradigms which can explain the complex web of self-interest and domination that define the state-society relationship. The inherent value of reforming our way of thinking and giving voice to cultures that are neglected or discarded by overriding structures of power are vocalised in the words of Eric Wolf (1982: 17): "Why do we insist on transforming dynamic and interconnected phenomena into static and disconnected things? Part of it is due to the way in which we have apprehended our own history."

It is from this perspective that a revisionist study of refugees can explain the phenomenon of social exclusion as a consequence of the strategy of mass rearrangement promoted by the international geopolitical scene. This global context, defined by humanitarian crises suffered by entire societies forcefully driven from their territories and homes, is causing the dismemberment of cultural identity in many parts of the world. The situation is further accentuated when transitory conditions of suffering are categorised and institutionalised under the label of 'refugee', and extend indefinitely over time. Marc Augé (1992) has proposed a useful new theory to connect time with space. Consequently, when one chooses to analyse refugees as a new social identity caused by a massive exclusion or forced displacement, it becomes clear that the Saharawis in Algeria are a historic group with no place to live. The situation is aggravated when, instead of being granted a place to live, their transit area acquired a

permanence. That is the great paradox of the fact explained by Augé with the term "non-places" and the meaning of transiency for the political status of a refugee.

In late 2010, I carried out fieldwork for three months in the Saharawi refugee camps located in the vicinity of Tindouf, Algeria, in what is called the Algerian Hamada, a most inhospitable piece of wasteland about 800 kilometers from the border with Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. The Saharawi are separated from their former country by a vast "wall of shame" – the second longest wall in the world after the Great Wall of China, built by the Moroccans to avoid contact with and prevent the return of Saharawis to their territory. It is a physical and symbolic manifestation of Saharawi political and social fragmentation. The purpose of my study was to analyse the social and health strategies adopted for some 165,000 people forced to leave their territory and develop a nomadic lifestyle.

> *it is a physical and symbolic manifestation of Saharawi political and social fragmentation*

For over 34 years, about half the Saharawi people have survived in precarious conditions under political asylum granted by Algeria and by humanitarian aid provided by European non-governmental organisations and other external cooperation agencies. Despite being a rootless community, their organisational capacity for survival and motivation to construct an ex-patria state against all odds overrides any concept of what it means to be a refugee community in the conventional sense. The Saharawis have shown physical and psychological resistance against the adverse circumstances of repression, war and an unforgiving climate, but in so doing have developed

a resilient capacity of adaptation and self-education, spurring transformations in their economic and healthcare strategies. This has had the effect of fostering a sedentarising tendency, both the cause and result of building a state from exile.

A capacity for deep structural change began in 1973 with a revolutionary process culminating in the creation of a unique "Frente Polisario" government, rather than a system based on tribal organisation. This government exemplifies a form of social change that breaks from classical definitions in economic anthropology and economic policy. It is constituted in the different strategies that a group can take under unfavourable circumstances, including the large-scale oppression, social exclusion and widespread poverty experienced by many refugee populations.

One of the priorities of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) from the beginning was the creation of a comprehensive public health system to attend to the unique needs of a population locked in a desert environment without many resources. It was especially important to assist the large number of wounded war victims resulting from clashes with the Moroccan army. What is striking is that most of the new Saharawi medical culture that has emerged is pioneered by local doctors who lack professional training, but rely instead on firsthand experience of conflict on the frontlines. War has defined much of the identity and the idiosyncrasies of existence for the Saharawi community. This explains why many hospitals and healthcare centers in the camps are named after men killed in battle, those who are revered as martyrs or shrouded in a mythical narrative of their epic survival in exile. Such narratives of fallen heroes attach a token of authenticity to the powerful concepts of nation and historical continuity—linking past, present and future—as well as the struggle for honour and statehood that sustains the frustrated hope that their territorial aspirations will not fall apart.

Fig #15

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Further exploration :

http://www.saharalibre.es/modules.php?name=MujeresSaharauis&op=medicina

Figs #15-17- Photography by Diana Julià Llobet

At the beginning of the period of exile, the community created a central military hospital located in Bol·la to treat the most severe cases of trauma and injury. The major hospital is now located in Rabouni and is supported by four regional hospitals distributed along the four *wilayas* (provinces). These are supported by local clinics in the *dayras* (municipalities), which attend to the basic healthcare needs of the population and are accessible to all citizens. The socio-political group that runs the Saharawi camps is focused on two basic areas of intervention: the prevention of common infectious or contagious diseases, the training of qualified nursing personnel and provision of medicine from other countries friendly to the Saharawis, including Cuba, Algeria and Libya.

war has defined much of the identity and the idiosyncrasies of existence for the Saharawi community

Social provisions coexist with traditional healing practices of traditional Saharawi medicine, including "*taglidi*" (based on ancient knowledge of herbal medicine) or others that are linked directly with the magico-religious tradition. Ancient techniques are still in force among the population, even if they are less widespread than conventional medicine. The use of plants and other rituals remains a reality of life, especially among the older generations and in the early stages of a disease. This is despite the fact that such practices are officially discouraged as they are seen to represent an obstacle to the process of modernisation and development.

The state of the indigenous healthcare system in the SADR makes the role of external agents of cooperation and assistance (such as NGOs) absolutely essential for the survival of the Saharawis. The way ahead lies in overcoming the structural deficiencies of what can only be described as under-developed healthcare institutions, but policymakers must be wary of interventions that could potentially increase the ills common to Third World dependence and delay the establishment of locally devised public spaces that could consolidate the foundation of a new state. Externally driven development policies that risk uprooting traditional practices and the local healing culture should be critically analysed.

Anthropologists must carefully evaluate the range of challenges and risks that may lead to dependence among the Saharawi refugees on European assistance policy in the areas of poverty-reduction, health and nutrition, and social inclusion. Such dependence may subvert their own efforts to construct a public space on their own terms. My fieldwork has led me to appreciate the unexpected reality on the ground that, against all Darwinian expectations, the Saharawi have demonstrated great resilience over several decades and have not given up on their hopes of creating a structure of self-organisation from exile.

Figs #16 & 17

A North London Derby in Lodwar Town? Thoughts on British Football in Kenya

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The North London Derby is essentially shorthand for the Arsenal versus Tottenham Hotspur football match. This match has a rich history, only getting better by the year as the Spurs fashion a team famed for their slick brand of football and capable of matching their rivals. Nonetheless, the North London derby does not matter to me. Nor does it matter to a lot of people. As a Middlesbrough Football Club supporter, I am more worried about the prospect of being manager-less and relegated into League One than I am about whether the beautiful monstrosity that is the Emirates Stadium is being breached by the Tottenham Hotspur strike force. Yet in Kenya, in a bar somewhere between Kitale and Lodwar, a sign advertising the game hangs diligently outside. Here, everyone seems to care about the final score, even when it comes to the most obscure match in the third round of the Football Association Challenge Cup.

During a recent trip to Kenya for my dissertation fieldwork, I wondered why football was so pervasive there. The manifestations of the game were highly visible and soon became a recurring theme throughout the trip. It was noticeable to my colleagues and I because it reminded us of home, a welcome familiarity in an alien landscape and a link between us and the Kenyan communities with whom we had little else in common. That sign and the interest in English football prompted questions concerning the powerful and intriguing social and cultural dynamics behind this largely undocumented phenomenon. Why does British football matter so much to many Kenyans, and why we should care?

As a sports fan in general, I dip in and out of football, but it does not generally penetrate my everyday life. However, sitting in the office belonging to Joseph, the Chief of Nakoret village, I was struck by the familiar symbols that surrounded me. As we chatted about the fieldwork we were going to be conducting, the local *Mzee* (elders) filtered in quietly and sat around to listen to the proceedings. The oldest, and therefore most respected, *Mzee* was wearing a Manchester United woolly hat (no, I wouldn't wear one in the Kenyan desert either). It appeared that this was a symbol of status and wisdom, no longer delineated by the embodiment of trusted and true knowledge seated in the eyes or deeply ploughed face of a man who had witnessed many great things, but by a woolly hat sporting the badge of an English football team. I would never go so far as to argue that the hats had come to

replace other symbols of status, but this instance merely highlights the importance of football to many people in Kenya.

My colleague made the insightful observation that the further you go out of Nairobi, the lower down the Premiership the football shirts get. Fans in Nairobi wear Chelsea, Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool shirts. As you travel out of the capital, you see a smattering of Tottenham, Everton, Bolton and the likes. Most likely, this is due to simple trading and economics. It seems probable that once the football shirts get shipped to Nairobi, local customers pick and choose the most popular teams and the rest get shipped on further afield. If you asked the people wearing Bolton shirts in Kitale which team they support, one of the champions would doubtless be the answer. Still, it is nice to see Kenyans embracing teams that, frankly, no one would touch with a bargepole in England. The question I really want to pose, though, is why this is the case. Kenya has its fair share of respectable football teams—Ulinzi Stars and Tusker United, for example, are worthy of support purely for their names.

Ever since the 1880s, when Arthur Wharton stepped on to the pitch with Preston North End, there has been a history of African players in English football. During the 2009-2010 season all but two of the twenty Premiership teams had Africans

on their books. Surprisingly, Manchester United, one of the most popular teams in Kenya, still have no African representatives in their ranks. But the overriding motivation could be the appeal of supporting the African players, and it may be that African participation explains why Kenyans enjoy the Premiership. It must be a powerful thing to watch the African players in such a different sphere of life. Although it is a minute proportion – most teams have an average of thirteen foreign players, but there are only thirty-nine African players in the whole Premiership – this representation still matters to many Kenyans. Our Maasai guide in Naivasha National Park cited Drogba and Essien as his favourite players in the Premiership, highlighting the emphasis on Africans playing successful football for reputable teams. This may not be statistically significant, since it's possible that up to 75% of the English people you asked would name Drogba as one of the best players in the Premiership. But it's not half bad when someone you can identify with and admire is flying the flag for an entire continent by single-handedly setting the best league in the world on fire.

I would suggest that some Kenyans see football as a way of breaking free from the tribal politics that seems to pervade their society. Many of the camp assistants with us on our fieldwork would constantly snipe at each other and call each other out by their tribe instead of their name. Professor Isaiah Nengo (2004) from the University of California, Berkeley suggests that the tribe is one of the 'most obvious dominance structures' in Kenya. Each tribe is associated with a specific negative characteristic or stereotype, which form the basis of intertribal hierarchy. The Kikuyu, though successful, are typecast as greedy,

Mijekendo are lazy – all tribes have a stick with which to beat each other. Football, however, is not organised by tribe. If each Kenyan supports a successful English football team, they can create a new system of real one-upmanship and competition in a friendly, non-tribal way. As mentioned before, it is likely that factors such as socioeconomic status and distance from the capital have a bearing on selection of football team and related paraphernalia to which Kenyans claim loyalty. Since tribes are not organised by such metric, there is a strong possibility that support of a team can also transcend tribal boundaries and replace competition with unity for the duration of a match.

It is possible that English football represents the ultimate decadence: a world where no one has to worry about the everyday challenges posed by poor infrastructure, delivery of basic services, healthcare and education—at least for ninety minutes. These are the issues at the forefront of Kenyan minds as a new national constitution comes into force. Looking at the English soccer scene, they see a world unstained by corruption. But then again, they probably don't experience the English tabloids we are bombarded with on a daily basis. On the contrary, we struggled to find a newspaper in Lodwar that printed the football scores, despite the large demand for them among the people in our camp. Because of its relative isolation, the newspapers in Lodwar either come a day late or do not come at all. It is easy to forget the lengths to which some people must go to enjoy a simple pleasure such as following the football, when we can click on the BBC website at our leisure.

I would not seek to justify the claim that Kenyans love English football because they aspire to our modern way of life, or that it really exemplifies a category of escapism through a grassroots sport that, technically, everybody and anybody can succeed in. I merely wanted to share some observations and marvel at the power of football in giving people something to share around the world. I recall a story my father once told me about being in a bar in the Czech Republic (when he was young and probably cooler than me). No one could speak English, yet he managed to carry out a broken conversation with the Czech men in the bar, comprised mainly of 'Hurst' and 'Bobby Moore.' The point is that football pervades everyday life in many places around the world. The new Kenya is emerging and there is no reason why it couldn't host a great football tournament itself. Wouldn't it be brilliant if in 2030, when the Kenyan Constitution is fully in force, the North London, Merseyside or Manchester derby is played in Lodwar? Maybe it could be a new arena for the players, a new part of the world where football matters as much if not more than at home. And I tell you what: I'll see you there.

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Ecological crisis: the new moral currency of capitalism?

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Michael Foucault described how in the 17th century, in order to impose its ethos of work and greed in a definite way, capitalism was forced to confine, discipline and eliminate the sprawling mass of madmen, scoundrels, layabouts and vagrant poor. It had to deal with a whole humanity whose very existence exposed the fundamental lie of capitalism's new order of production and consumption. Today's situation reflects that of the 17th century; in response to the impending ecological catastrophe, a new economy is developing, and it will not be established without a similar selection of subjects and zones singled out for transformation. As the reasons for the crisis become engulfed by the immediacy and gravity of the crisis itself, the emerging green capitalism says, 'without us, the world as you know it will end'. Ecology has almost seamlessly become the new morality of capitalism and the surreal concoction of problems redressed as solutions is presented as our only hope.

To gain an analytical perspective and elucidate a possible path of response on this issue I will engage with Slavoj Žižek's writing on the driving logic of neo-liberalism, the logic of desire, as a constitutive force in the subjectivities produced by neo-liberal ideology. Žižek's combination of Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory is useful in describing how the idea of environmental catastrophe holds the potential to become the ideological pin securing the hegemony of neo-liberalism. And to explain why, even though people know that capitalism is responsible for the desolation we face, there is such inertia to seek alternatives outside of the capitalist model.

Žižek argues that Lacan's logic of desire and the logic of capitalism share a fundamental similarity in structuring the radically individualist subjectivity produced and advocated by neo-liberalism. He asserts that, just like the subject of desire, the subject of neo-liberalism is fundamentally empty (Žižek 1993, 1999). This radical emptiness is constituted by and constitutive of capitalism as a system. The logic is quite simple; the main objective of capitalism can only be the failure to satisfy desire. For it is only by keeping desire alive that the insatiable drive for new products that is essential to capitalism's existence can be maintained (Glynos 2001: 87). The mad dance of capitalism's unremitting growth is therefore nothing more than the desperate attempt to escape its own constitutive but debilitating contradiction.

The maintenance of the subject as a subject of desire depends on the radical disappearance of the object of desire before it can produce satisfaction. This apparent paradox is the fundamental aspect of desire itself; ultimately each object of desire can only function as a decoy veiling the void that causes desire whilst leading the subject into blind circles of want, consumption and dissatisfaction. It is this constant and insatiable need to fill the lack

of fulfilment by increasing commodity circulation that drives capitalism as a system.

The constant failure to achieve the satisfaction that the subject desires is veiled by what Žižek calls 'fantasy'. Fantasy covers over the necessary dissatisfaction of the subject by reference to an 'object petit a', an entity which is primordially extracted and the absence of which is experienced by the subject as the cause of its lack (Žižek 2000: 23-4). The object petit a has that peculiar characteristic of appearing increasingly further away the closer you get to it. Thus the more profit you make, the more you want. Fantasy works by constantly linking our objects of desire to obstacles that prevent their direct consumption, thereby redirecting our desires onto the wish to eliminate those obstacles and masking the fundamental impossibility of satisfying desire. Capitalism is able to sustain the inherent instability of perpetual desire only by creating and invoking a constitutive outside; something embodied as a threat to the subject's way of life, which is responsible for the perpetual incapacity of the system to fill its promised potential.

Fantasy provides us with a way of organising our being, and preventing the radical unease that coming too close to the impossibility of fulfilling desire stirs in us. In fact to have a fantasy fulfilled is to experience your own lack, and is a nightmare (Žižek 2005). People rely on their fantasies because they provide a sense of order and control in their lives; the 'knowledge' of your own identity. This means that what is responsible for powers' grip on us is not so much the false narrative that fantasy offers us but in a much more fundamental sense the ways of being that it makes possible for us.

When Žižek says 'the ecology of fear has all the chances of developing into the predominant form of ideology of global capitalism' he is referring to the capacity inherent in the idea of ecological disaster to become the ultimate fantasy frame, the constitutive 'outside' that prevents our consumption of the promised fruits of capitalism (Žižek 2007). No longer are we denied full satisfaction by elements on the fringes of the economy, but by a disaster that threatens our fundamental way of being. Capitalism says that from now on you will have to accept the incomplete satisfaction of your desires because humanity is in an environmental state of emergency.

This whole edifice of fantasy relies on the subject as a subject of desire, deeply unwilling to challenge capitalism in a fundamental and rigorous fashion. The ultimate political or critical ideological aim should therefore be to 'search for ways to sap the force of the underlying fantasy frame itself', something that can be achieved by creating spaces which contain a dimension of universality outside capital (Žižek 1993: 220); spaces of being that allow us to abandon the logic of desire and create ourselves from a different substance. Pragmatically rational critiques of capital typically intervene at the level of the symptom and leave the underlying causal subject of desire intact. For critical interventions to be effective they must affect a crossing of the social fantasy and challenge the subject of desire.

This is where a certain kind of ecological movement holds the potential to perform a radical critique of neo-liberal ideology. An ecological movement that manages to cross the fantasy and make obvious the central place of the logic of desire in the environmental crisis will succeed in making the lack in neo-liberal political-economic discourses part of our everyday experience. A recognition of the ecological crisis as caused by the subject of desire, and the relationship to nature this necessitates, renders ridiculous such notions as 'national sovereignty', 'reduced growth' and 'carbon trading'. The ecological crisis therefore has the potential to undermine the unconscious faith people place in capitalism as an organising system by exposing the impotence of power in finding solutions to the crisis.

The critique of the logic of capitalism becomes central to the critical ideological agenda because the logic of capital creates and relies on a certain type of subjectivity and therefore of ethics. When Žižek (1999: 341) argues that the critique of political economy is essential to the effective critique of contemporary inequalities, such as those produced by the ecological crisis, it is because of the empty subjectivi-

ties it makes possible. The depoliticised economy is the 'disavowed "fundamental fantasy" of postmodern politics' because it erases the subject of desire from its position as ethically implicated in the perpetuation of capitalism. Therefore, 'a properly political act would necessarily entail the re-politicisation of the economy' because this is the necessary first step in traversing the fundamental fantasy of the subject of desire (ibid: 355). The fantasy of the de-politicised economy prevents us from seeing that the economy is the crisis and allows it to redress problems as solutions. This is the great tragedy of environmental movements that fail to politicise the economy; under the pretext of saving the environment from destruction they merely save the causes of the destruction.

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Mythology of a Movement:
Inclusion and Identity in the 2008 Obama Campaign

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Considering the intense election fever that gripped America in 2008 and the massive level of volunteer involvement, it is surprising that the enormity and scope of the Obama Campaign's "ground-game" was not the subject of greater coverage in the mainstream media. This ground-game – the ordinary volunteers who ran the Campaign's ambitious voter-contact project – comprised the main body of the Campaign, yet in their reports many pundits and media personalities inadvertently demonstrated their ignorance of what was going on beyond the speeches being made by the candidates themselves. Even among those who realised that Obama had the edge on organisation and grassroots enthusiasm, few were fully aware of the unprecedented operation that was unfolding on the "ground." I spent two months as a full-time volunteer in a Virginia Field Office in 2008, and here relate ethnographically the experiences of the campaign operatives – experiences which, taken together, I believe were key to Obama's success.

The Obama Campaign is suitable for anthropological study because it constituted a recognisable, anthropological "society". It was a cohesive, self-indentifying group of individuals sharing a common set of rules, moral standards, cultural practices and beliefs; it was structured hierarchically, yet relied on a sense of inclusiveness and egalitarianism for its survival and success; and it is only understandable in the context of its historical background and the other cultures with which it interacted. However, the Campaign was simultaneously atypical in that it existed primarily for a specific, pre-defined purpose, and was constrained by clear limits of time. These two distinctive features meant that the Campaign assumed a super-social dynamic, raising it to a plane of existence that most other societies, occupied by the practicalities of sustaining everyday life over long periods of time, are unable to reach or at least maintain for very long. Because of this, the Campaign became a major psychological factor in the identity of many of its members. Volunteers who initially intended to donate only a few hours per week soon found that they were willing to give up almost all their time to become a more integral part of what became the mainstay of their lives.

Whether he aimed to or not, Obama successfully made his candidacy appear not

Fig #18

as a political act of self-promotion, but as a social phenomenon that implicated huge numbers of people. Obama came across as merely the metonymical figurehead for a dramatic expression of popular will; his name became synonymous with abstract ideas like "hope" and "change" that became valuable principally because of their unprecedented public support. Comparisons were made to the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1960s. Such comparisons effectively insinuated that to oppose Obama was to be in some way deviant, that his supporters clearly constituted "mainstream" America and American values, and that one could confer a sense of social virtue on oneself through association with these sentiments which were sweeping the nation, and indeed the world.

As a consequence, active members fighting what they perceived as "the good fight" by volunteering for the Campaign felt that they were riding the crest of something much greater than their local office. This was a powerful motivating force for Campaign activities, especially for newer volunteers who felt they had finally "joined in". Campaign office discussions routinely revolved around developments in other parts of the country. Colloquial rhetoric repeatedly underlined the fact that what we were going through was happening on a national scale. Obama stressed the same point in almost all of his speeches.

Another theme stressed by Obama and his retinue in the national media was that of openness. On the ground, making the Campaign as inclusive as possible was a major priority. On my first day arriving in the Field Office, despite staff having

no idea who I was, my foreign accent, and my obvious lack of confidence and credentials, I was given a warm greeting, short conversation, and immediately put to work making phone calls. This kind of trust was extended instinctively to all new members of the Campaign "family" – not only because it was official policy to do so, but because the organisers, having been welcomed in similar fashion and having grown accustomed to this scale of inclusion, could not imagine any other way of treating volunteers. Later, when I had risen to the same position of the organisers who had originally welcomed me, the same practices of openness and inclusiveness came naturally despite my British introversion.

Obama came across as merely the metonymical figurehead for a dramatic expression of popular will

These principles of openness and inclusion resulted in energised, dedicated and highly efficient workers. Our small office's productivity was astonishing. An ethic of selfless hard work reigned without opposition, creating a palpable "peer pressure" to be more useful and productive. Those who attempted to shirk duties or who did not contribute that little bit extra risked stigmatisation in the form of negative gossip or, worst of all, public exposure if a Field Organiser had to go so far as to ask

the person at fault to "up their game", something I remember happening only once.

The office itself was not hierarchical. Orders were issued as requests and were always obeyed, though counter-orders could be made simultaneously. Despite this apparent lack of structure, the Campaign as a whole was professionally run, centralised and based on tactics formulated in the Campaign Headquarters in Chicago and employed across the country. Few of the activities carried out by Field Offices were determined on-site. This meant that local offices could be allowed to remain egalitarian and inclusive, whilst their output would never stray off-target.

This was the one area where the Field Organiser, as the only member of paid Campaign staff in a local office, might exercise authority above and beyond other full-time volunteers. I remember on one occasion protesting against what I perceived as a time-wasting exercise of attaching route-maps to canvass packs for door-knocking volunteers. The Field Organiser insisted that the laborious process be completed. When I protested a second and third time, she told me unequivocally that the instructions came from (Campaign Manager) David Plouffe himself and as such they were "non-negotiable".

Names like Plouffe, Axelrod (Chief Strategist) and of course Obama himself took on mythological significance among the volunteers. Legends were constructed around them that made them appear invincible and omniscient. In the evening before Election Day, the core group of full-time volunteers in our office was "allowed access" to a phone conference in which Plouffe and Obama addressed their troops before the final battle. The awed atmosphere in the office as the message was received showed that these men had become idols imbued with a symbolic potency far beyond their actual powers. By contrast, a personal visit from Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett, whose influence in the Campaign direction was arguably comparable to Plouffe or Axelrod, but who happened to have a less high-profile position, was treated with far less (though still considerable) excitement.

The idolatry of certain individuals was part of a general mythology with its own narrative that the Campaign generated, and which was linked to the feeling of participation in a genuine social movement. Much of this was merely derivative of pre-existing American mythology, exploited

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by rhetoric and imagery. Campaign offices were covered wall-to-wall in posters and slogans that tapped into the unifying symbols of the Campaign.

Obama's speeches projected these same images, most notably in the "Yes We Can" New Hampshire concession speech. The speech's themes of hope and legendary success against the odds, highlighted by clear reference to past idols – King, Kennedy, Lincoln, and the Founding Fathers – that have exhibited such qualities are not uncommon in American politics and beyond, yet rarely are they deployed so effectively. It goes without saying that all of the campaigners in the Field Offices had watched Obama's key speeches multiple times. Many, myself included, had attended rallies to witness his oratory first-hand. In fact, watching YouTube speeches (often further dramatised by creative editing) became an important ritual in Campaign life. Other rituals occurred more frequently

and were often more practical in nature (eg canvass-pack compilation and phone-bank training); these became routines that were both useful and integrative for the Campaign.

Among the many unprecedented aspects of the 2008 Obama Campaign, media attention at the time focused particularly on the innovative use of social networking and the Internet as a new means of political campaigning with the potential to revolutionise US elections. Despite the hype, my experience suggests that – apart from watching YouTube on occasion! – virtual networking constituted a minor or nonexistent part of Campaign life for most volunteers, who were far too busy with voter-contact efforts in the actual world. While online networks certainly played an important role and helped to generate enthusiasm, it was the non-virtual socialisation of campaigners that was most crucial in propelling Obama to the White House.

Savvy politicians seeking office in 2012 will note that Obama's success cannot be attributed entirely to powerful technological innovations, such as the vast information database and campaign-from-home Internet applications. Rather, it derived from processes of social identification and inclusion that created what Appadurai (2008) has called the "magic" of the effervescent and unifying candidate.

The achievements of the 2008 Obama Campaign lay chiefly in its distinctive socialising mechanisms, which allowed it to generate a powerful organic machine comprised of thousands of socially involved individuals. It seems unlikely that the conditions for a similarly spontaneous and intensely motivated society can be recreated to the same extent in the near future. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of the 2008 Obama Campaign is important precisely because of its exceptionality. It demonstrates how society can function at its extremes, and holds valuable lessons for the mobilisation of social forces.

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Fig #18 - Image by Olivia Vane
Figs #19&20- Photography by John Wallis

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Fig #20

Dolls and Pieces from the Bosnian War: Sanela Muharemovic's Story

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The war started suddenly. One day I heard my parents talking about the war, and the next day there was shelling and we had to run. It surprised everyone. Everyone was expecting a war in Croatia, but not in Bosnia.

I was a girl of two and a half years old when the war began, and six when it finished. My family lived in a suburb called Briješće in the western part of Sarajevo,

the capital city of Bosnia Herzegovina. Our house was just being built and we managed to furnish the first floor with furniture from our previous rented apartment, with some help from our neighbours who worked in construction. The roof was not ready, so we covered it with thick, red nylon cloth. The roof always leaked when it rained.

We lived in the basement during most of the war. It was not a basement really, just a by-product of building a house on a hill. The walls were made of grey cinderblocks and the floor underfoot was damp earth. The ceiling was very low, and I can barely stand upright there today. The basement was a very small but long and narrow space. It was always wet and dark, and all sorts of animals would get in through loose planks in the small wooden door.

I mostly have memories of things that I noticed, more than things that I did. Like things I remember hearing, seeing, and feeling with my hands. I remember looking at the ceiling, which was a strange construction to me. It looked like bricks – but on the ceiling. A lot of snails would get in the basement and crawl on the ceiling, and I remember following the sticky trails behind them to find where they came from and where they finished.

I have memories of mostly things that I noticed, more than things that I did.

My father built a bed with some wooden planks near the end of the room. We slept on two mattresses, one large and one small. My mother was afraid that the rats in the basement would attack my baby brother, so she slept with him all the time. At the other end of the room, there were two shelves with food, one on each side of the door. There was a little cupboard and an oil lamp, but we also used candlelight.

I remember that we also had a small stove. It was slightly bigger than a normal trash can, all rusty and really miserable. I have always wondered where we got such a sorry thing. There was no firewood, so when it was cold we had to burn all sorts of old things, from clothes to shoes. My father made a hole in the wall for a pipe to get the smoke outside, but the smoke would just get everywhere anyway. Once when we were burning an old coat, it got so smoky that we just had to go outside.

Now we use the basement for storing pickles, potatoes and big things. I can walk down to the basement easily when I need to get something from there. You get there in half a minute. But it was really dangerous and hard to do that during the war. The basement door opened to the east side of the house, while most of the shooting came from the street on the north side. You had to walk for about four metres, exposed, to get to the main entrance on the south side of the house. We had bags filled with sand beside the basement door to shield us from the view of snipers. The bags partially protected us from bullets as well.

My father was away working as an army medic on a mountain. I think it was around 1994. My brother had just begun to speak, and we kept laughing at the way he pronounced the name of the mountain when someone would ask him where his father was.

It was shelling pretty badly and my baby brother was screaming for a toy. He was looking for this toy, which he called *picamenka* ("pitz-a-menka"). We had no clue what he meant because it did not sound like anything known to us. But he kept screaming for it; he really wanted to play with his *picamenka*. So my mother went through all the toys she could see in the basement, and no matter what she gave him he kept on crying. Maybe he wanted something from the first floor, she thought. I remember her running up and down to bring toys for him while the shells kept falling around the house. I don't know how long that went on, but I remember my brother screaming. It was horrible.

Then, I do not know how, but I realised that maybe he wanted *crvenkapica* ("tsr-venka-pits-a"). *Crvenkapica* means Red Riding Hood in Bosnian. My Red Riding Hood doll was made of rubber and she wore a red dress and an apron, with a bow under her chin. She held a basket with flowers in her hand, and when you pressed her she squealed.

The doll was under the bed that my father had made. My mother found it, gave it to my brother and we finally knew what *picamenka* was.

Even now, my mother still talks about how she could have died that day bringing toys for my brother.

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you had to walk about four metres, exposed, to get to the main entrance

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Author's Note:

I first interviewed my high school roommate Sanela Muharemovic in 2009 for an assignment for a journalism class. This was the finished piece. It was meant to be a personal portrait.

The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place between 1992 and 1995, during Sanela's childhood. She had told me this story before and it stuck in my memory because of how poignant it was, so I asked her to tell it to me again, and tried to get a fuller picture of the context of this memory. During the editing process for Imponderabilia, Sanela looked over the piece again and pointed out parts that did not match what she remembered, or what she was trying to convey to me in our conversation. After writing her comments, she said in her e-mail, "Those are my suggestions. I was wondering where these discrepancies came from. I am sure one is that language itself is an imperfect medium of communication. [...] But maybe memories change over time too. Strange, but possible."

Maybe if I had spoken with other members of her family, they would have told me the story in a different way. I suppose how we remember is just as important as what we remember. Many of the expressions in this portrait are direct quotes from my conversation with Sanela. I tried to let her voice shine through because this is, after all, her story.

Fig #21- Photography by Sanela Muharemovic

"Now it's all tidy and colorful. Back then, there were no stairs; just mud, sand and some wildly growing bushes."

Materials, Senses & Media

The articles in this section aim to cover alternative ways of understanding, engaging with, and representing the world and the people in it. Taking various critical stances and perspectives, the authors challenge taken-for-granted ideas by problematising our frequent prioritisation of certain sensory experiences, media and ideas over others. Within the context of a holistic approach, the role of the individuals making decisions and selections is reassessed as well as their choice of media. Be it an undergraduate filming collaboration in West Bengal, the problematic form of photographs, the arrangement of Amharic crosses in a museum, a discussion about the position of the researcher or sound within visual anthropology, we believe that the topics addressed in these articles will provoke anthropologists to consider the sensory products of anthropology in new light. This section reflects on the critical review of such products, the materials in which they are embodied, and the media employed by the ethnographer and their subject(s) to describe them. In so doing, the authors challenge us to develop an analysis of the possibilities of the sensory documentation of "culture" as part of the production of anthropological knowledge.

_ Dominik Hoehn & Sertaç Sehlikoglu

Top Shelf vs. Bottom Drawer:
The Placement and Politics of Amharic Crosses

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Introduction

The study of Africa is often the study of one's preconceptions about Africa. A Westerner studying Africa will face the African version of "orientalism," where mental constructions of places are made of ideas that we don't realize we have. In choosing to study the history, form, and display of Amharic Ethiopian silver crosses kept in the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), I initially wanted to study the introduction and evolution of these foreign objects, but actually the wearing of crosses in Ethiopia has been prescribed for centuries, and habitual for over a millennium. Why then are such important representations of these aspects of life kept in the bottom drawer of the eastern Africa display at MOA? Certain aspects of museum practice, such as protection-through-seclusion and the inability of curators to feature everything, especially with MOA's enormous collection, have led to preferential display of the extremely historical and contemporary African pieces.

History

The history of Christianity in Ethiopia is well-entrenched, beginning in the year 330 C.E. when the Emperor Azana converted (McKay, 1974: 36). This began the lasting association in Ethiopia between the ruling elites, Orthodox Christianity, and the northern highlands of Amhara. This association between observant Christianity and high status led to the habitual wearing of crosses as a way to visibly differentiate between Christians and other religious groups. "(...) Amharas and Tigreans (...) considered their religion to be a part of their superior northern culture (...)" (Hamer 2002: 605-606). Religious differ-

ences encoded sociocultural ones in a subtle ranking system.

MOA's catalogue (MOACAT) identifies five different kinds of Ethiopian crosses: neck (worn by men), pectoral (worn by women), processional (placed on a staff), church (placed on a church roof), and the cross of benediction (worn by a priest). Due to the small size, chains, and chain loops, the crosses at MOA must be either neck or pectoral crosses. Thus, the seven Amharic crosses found in Drawer 5 of Case 100 in the Multiversity Gallery of MOA are good examples of the typical material culture of the area regarding personal adornment.

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it is a museological catch-22

Display

MOA's African shelves are tucked into the back area of a huge gallery, arranged according to the position of the oceans, in an attempt not to favor any one cultural area. This places Ethiopia's shelf at the back, protected by clearly lit glass. This is an advantageous setting for the storage on the shelves but not for the drawers below the shelves. The crosses are in the bottom drawer; those that are on display are discreetly labelled, the white paper popping against the dark foam. The crosses are grouped together next to a box of an unidentified black mineral, packed equally carefully. The first impression of Drawer 5 of Case 100 is of protection. The only thing that moves during the opening of the heavy drawer is the loose mineral. Glass covers the top of the drawer. This makes it literally difficult to get a closer look at the pieces than that granted by the museum until one goes to the MOACAT. Here, one can zoom into great detail without one's humanity endangering the pieces. This protection is created through total isolation. It is an irony inherent to museum studies that artifactual examination, creating formal and historical connection

to people, requires unnatural distance for preservation.

Thus, the second impression is of the seclusion of the pieces. The question becomes: why were these pieces placed here? The shelves seem populated with pieces that either emphasize the historical Western stereotype of Africa, such as the Bamileke Makonde sculptures with their dark wood and extended carving, or the newsworthy negative aspects of modern life in Africa, such as the Body Maps envisioning the effects of HIV on the body. In order not to reinforce stereotypes, the display could simply include more labelling about the intent in showing these pieces, rather than relying on the viewer's critical knowledge. Metalworking and Ethiopian Christianity is as much a part of the culture of Africa as woodcarving and HIV. It should not be shoved in a bottom drawer where many will never see it.

Interpretation

Thus far, we have discussed the role of the exhibitor in placing and displaying these crosses. The question becomes: what effect does this have upon the viewer? Even: what role does the viewer play? Unfortunately, human experiential variation makes it impossible to predict the reaction of every viewer. We must assume the viewer is deeply interested in African objects or
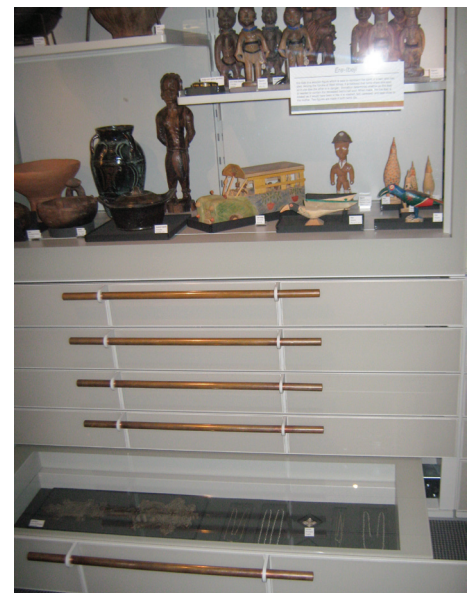

Fig #22

Fig #23

patient enough to make his/her way into a bottom drawer at the rear of the large gallery in which the crosses are exhibited. However, the role of the viewer is set. S/he takes in the pieces, worked by the creator and displayed by the curator, incorporating both visual information and material information from the sparse label and the extensive MOACAT system, creating a feedback loop: "[e]xplanatory information affects the way he looks, and problems met in looking give rise to a desire for explanation," (Baxandall 1991: 37).

religious differences encoded sociocultural ones in a subtle ranking system

This active role played by the viewer, leading to the conclusion taken home after leaving the museum, is what makes the choice of display so important. The crosses themselves do not change; the relationship between the pieces and the viewer is dictated by how it is seen. The sight and subsequent interpretation of these crosses is highly valuable for the understanding of Ethiopian social life, due to the cultural markers they encode. These crosses were worn as signifiers of the cultural elite and have been for centuries. Missing this precludes an important connection of religious relation. The active viewer can relate this religious signage to parallels in displays for other continents nearby in the gallery. Asia, standing nearby, has a fascinating history of religious interaction that can be seen in their material objects. If "the effect of visual similarity is

to accent difference" (Baxandall 1991: 40), then these crosses act as visual markers of the varied religious histories of the world, whether they are around the neck of an Ethiopian or of the viewer in Canada.

Having discussed the importance of the provenance of these crosses and the interpretive role of the viewer, the role of the curator comes into question. After all, complete understanding of what these particular crosses mean can only be truly felt by the creator(s). "Exhibitors cannot represent cultures" (Baxandall 1991: 41); their role is in creating "nonmisleading and stimulating" display (ibid). They must facilitate the interpretive mental dialogue between the creator and the viewer that allows the latter to actively engage in the exhibit. For these Amharic crosses, their relative lack of display impedes this connection, though it probably results from unavoidable circumstances.

Conclusion

Museums are inherently flawed places due to their limitations. They cannot cover all topics because no visitor could take in that much information. Thus, museums must focus their scope, meaning some displays will be impoverished and others will be absent. What is shown often has a veneer of false completion. The display that viewers experience holistically is the collected fragments of a culture that the museum has sewn together. The seams, that is to say the curatorial intent, are rarely noticed, and the viewer takes in the display uncritically. This is emphasized when people are overwhelmed by what they see. MOA, in putting as much on display as possible in an attempt to not hoard their collection, is acting as a teaching institution, allowing their collection to educate as much as possible. Unfortunately, few can take in the 16,000 artifacts in the Multiversity Gallery at once. In trying, the amazing collection

becomes infinitely ignorable as a blur of an overwhelming background. It is a museological catch-22. Still, it would be terrible for people to visit the largest teaching museum in Canada without having their preconceptions and ideas about Africa's religious history challenged and expanded in some way. More prominent display of these crosses would be a simple way to achieve that.

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Fig #22 - Photo by Abigail Ettelman
Fig #23- Photo by Camilla Burkot
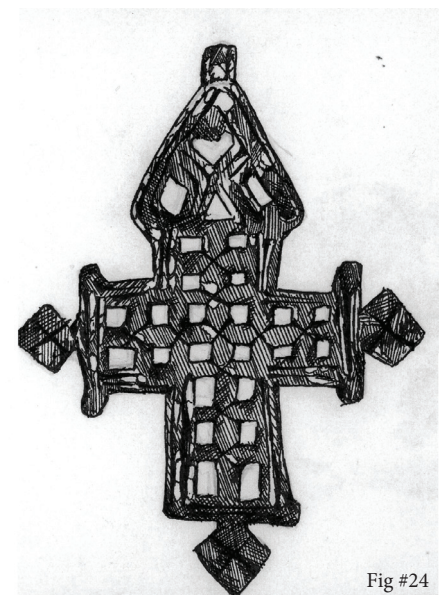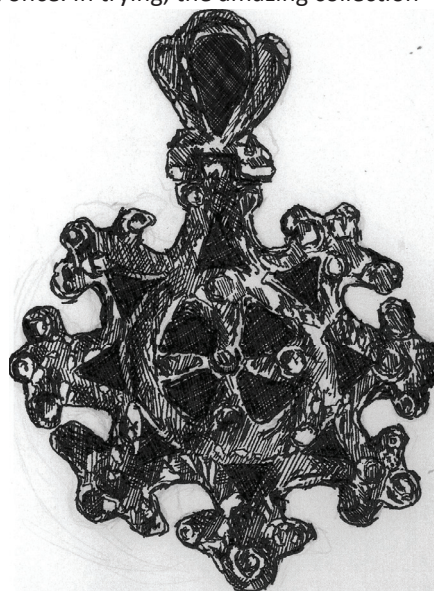Fig #24 - Study of Amharic Crosses by Olivia Vane

Fig #24

Discussing the Politics of Sound in Visual Anthropology

Anthropological filmmaking and audio recording have a tendency to borrow work from outside of the discipline. Historically, this has been marked by the careful consideration, or criticism, of non-Western cultures which become archetypes of the exotic 'other'. This can be accomplished immediately through the visual and aural mediums; the dress, body language, practice and presentation of rituals. Many of the things that make a culture so inherently 'other' – and subject to academic discourse – can be represented but not explicated in film. Visual anthropology treats the issue of representation as central to the discipline; the visual does not do justice to the entire social system, but offers a unique methodology for the consideration of cultures.

Sound, inside of film and by itself, is an entirely different matter. While audio is technically fifty percent of film, the soundtrack has often been important only to the extent that it supports the visual medium. Authentic filmmaking, consisting largely of run-and-gun camera work and conjuring notions of glorified cinema verité, has left the audio tracks to mere ambience and dialogue. The only people that are likely to notice or care about this are those involved in the audio engineering industry; within academia, it is left to ethnomusicologists. The treatment of audio in anthropological filmmaking varies from film to film, and so what exactly constitutes an anthropology of sound is not yet quantifiable. The politics of sound is then dismissed, in favour of a more powerful visual effect on the viewer. Effort taken to ensure that sound is emphasised in most anthropological documentary film is limited to signal quality.

There is an inherent bias in the process of representation in the visual media, but we must also ask what bias sound brings with it. The politics of sound has drastically different parameters within anthropological film, based on, for instance, where the microphone is pointed. This is far more ambiguous than the camera move, and thus the notion of an authorship of sound is far less tangible than a lens pointed at a subject. This issue will often emerge in explaining the reasons why sound and visual anthropology are not often considered in the same debate. There are two kinds of engagements with the subject of sound. One is technical, microphone placement and polar pattern, and the other is the academic's level of transparency – can the anthropologist asking questions be heard in the film? There are staunch advocates of audio recording as a method of documentation and data collection, but the visual debate is limited in its scope, since film discourse already has a model based on filming technique. The use of sound in anthropology requires a separate discourse altogether.

perhaps audio technologies are more mystifying to anthropologists than visual ones

The exact constitution of sound politics, and how anthropologists discuss sound design, only consists of the necessary minimum. The interactions between the soundtrack, the ambient noise, the dialogue, the visual and the accompanying text are the only debates concerning sound that exist within visual anthropology. Further, the space this debate occupies largely exists within the editing process, and in reviewing film. No other venue for these discussions exists because it does not need to – no one in anthropology benefits from these semantics, save for aspiring filmmakers. However, there are those visual anthropologists who make a point to discuss the importance of sound in and out of films. Such an anthropologist is Steven Feld, a self-proclaimed sound enthusiast of sorts. One should note that he is not only an anthropologist but also an ethnomusicologist and a linguist, which

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greatly affects the focus of his work and output. He explains that in his research, the use of tape was as much a compositional technique as it was an archival utility. By overdubbing and overlapping various tracks on another, a dense network of sounds was established, which he calls an amalgamation of soundtrack and ethnographic film techniques (Feld & Brenneis 2004). Feld and Brenneis show their comfort with the sound recorder and the impact that it has had on their work: sound offers anthropologists a way to gain further access to information, without being obtrusive within daily social interactions. The attempt to naturalise sound recording for anthropologists is only one step forward in data collection; it is the treatment of the recordings that is still stagnant in filmic discourse.

The importance of sound as a primary source for anthropological data is rarely advocated. Only a handful of anthropologists have been successful in using audio not only as a primary data source, but also as a supplement to a publication. This is often because they are studying music, which borders on ethnomusicological

there is an inherent bias in the process of representation in the visual, but we must also ask what bias sound brings with it?

study. Celebrity academic John Lomax's work has proven that audio recording itself is worthy of anthropological consideration, mostly because he captured a dying art: American blues music in its earliest incarnation. His work is famous because he was at the right place at the right time, and was well versed in the music and in audio engineering. Even still, other anthropologists such as Feld believe that audio recording's use does not stop at archival documentation.

Perhaps audio technologies are more mystifying to anthropologists than visual ones; the direction of the microphone is far less obvious than the camera lens' direction at the subject. Ethnographer Veit Erlmann elaborates on this mystique in Hearing Cultures (2005), where he argues that there is a sonic tactility within audio technology. The example that he uses for consideration is the telephone: its utility does not immediately reveal itself in use, as it is a seemingly passive device which somewhat magically connects people while being wholly disembodied. Erlmann's discussion of the mystique of audio technologies like the telephone is easily extended to the audio recorder, in that the utility is not only to document, but to provide the illusion of presence. This is a compelling argument for those interested in recording sound, though it is not convincing enough to merit an analysis of the sound as an anthropological subject itself. However, the politics of sound is worth investigating for potential uses of audio technology in academics. This relies not only on the visual anthropologist as academic, but also as the auteur.

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the importance of sound as a primary source for anthropological data is rarely advocated

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The future for sound in anthropology, temperamental as it may be, lies with those who are versed in linguistics or musicology. Perhaps sound can take a more prominent role not only within anthropological film, but within ethnographic practice as a whole. It has become commonplace for interviews to be analysed with a simple handheld audio recorder. This is not a new development, but it is becoming increas-

ingly accessible due to lower prices and greater efficiency of recording devices. The popularity of audio technologies in academia is at a crossroads because audio technology is improving exponentially. This will change the face of sound politics, as the technical side becomes less taxing and can be further assimilated into academics. Their "sensual scholarship," a term coined by Stollers (Erlmann 2005) to explain the methodological issues that are exclusive to audio recording, is celebrated only by those who take an interest in the audio-anthropology paradigm. Its success is contingent upon the researchers in the field who share an interest in beginning a dialogue in the merits of 'sound studies', which is interdisciplinary by nature. There is a future for the presence of sound in anthropology and it relies on a small group of enthusiastic academics who enjoy playing the role of anthropologist qua sound engineer: their time is now.

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John Lomax records Leadbelly at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ca9y_leadbelly-news-report_music
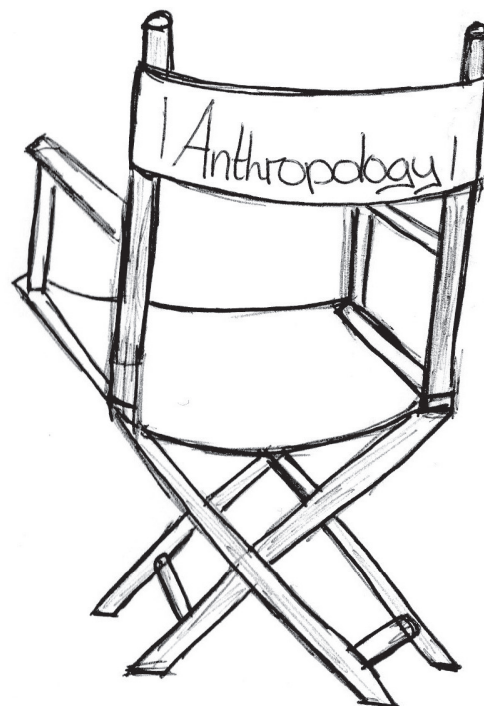

Fig #25 - Cartoon by Abi Lander

Fig #25

"Photographic evidence"?:
Destabilising the truth and exposing the art of photography

In the spirit of Imponderabilia's call for submissions of "conversations", this responds to Frerk Frobose's article from the journal's second issue (2010), in which he asserts that anthropologists should be "brave enough... [to] take photographs seriously and let them speak for themselves" (Frobose 2010: 46-7) by avoiding adding linguistic descriptions to ethnographic images. He demonstrates how pictures are not merely "illustrations of text" (ibid: 46) produced by anthropologists as reflections on their fieldwork encounters; rather the production of images is a culturally embedded practice with differential techniques, and attitudes to them, across the world.

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It is precisely this recognition of the techniques involved in creating images that leads me to question Frobose's appeal to let photographs speak for themselves. The idea that photographs are capable of such speech is underscored by the assumption that the photographic medium constitutes an authentic portrayal of an untouched reality. Looking at photography through the theoretical lens of the late twentieth century literary turn and its critiques, I argue that this is an illusion. Photographs should not be construed simply as illustrations whose function is to elaborate where written descriptions fall short; it is more revealing to see them as texts themselves, as manuscripts calling for a reading in the Geertzian sense of the word. Following in this vein, we would require a thick description of a photograph to be able to make an informed interpretation of it.

The comparable nature of photographers' and anthropologists' projects is highlighted by the comments of the American photographer, Bruce Davidson:

"People had to represent themselves to the camera...I would never concoct a situation, but I would pose them. I didn't feel that I was there to photograph the other. I felt I was close to them and empathised with them, and I think they learned about me, too" (quoted in Younge 2003: 55).

His emphasis of the intimate relationships he built with the people he photographed, and the notion of an exchange in learning about one another - a familiarisation of the unfamiliar on both sides - situates Davidson's approach to photography as characteristically anthropological. It also makes an implicit claim about the authenticity of the photographs: Davidson thinks he is able to take representative photographs of these people because he had

come to know them so well. Problematically, however, the space he gives people to "represent themselves" is only in front of the camera of which he is the privileged owner. Davidson's discussion of how he would "pose" his photographs but simultaneously give representational space to the people he depicted demonstrates that he is acutely aware of the paradoxes in this claim to authentic representation. His concerns echo those of Clifford, who writes that ethnographies, "[h]owever monological, dialogical, or polyphonic their form...are hierarchical arrangements of discourses" (Clifford 1986: 17). As hard as anthropologists (and photographers) try to give their subjects the chance of self-representation, they will always be in control of this hierarchy.

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photographs, more so than written works, appear to capture something real

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It is especially important that the role of the photographer in the production of images is emphasised, as photographs, more so than written works, appear to capture something real. The physical production of a photograph, the way it materialises as a result of light reflecting off people or things, makes it seem objective and true. In the words of Roland Barthes, the photograph is the only informative medium that is "exclusively constituted and occupied by a denoted message, a message which totally exhausts its mode of existence" (Barthes 1977: 18). Denoted messages are those which appear objective and real, in contrast to connoted messages, which bear the marks of their authors. Thus

photographs, much more so than texts, are accompanied by the illusion that they reflect reality rather than interpret it. This can cause us to leave the photographer out of the equation altogether and use photographs as if they were untainted evidence, slipping into the imagining that "in seeing photos, we see ourselves seeing" (Butler 2007: 956).

However, the scientific process of making a photograph is only half of the story. Davidson's discussion highlights that photographers, like the writers of ethnographic texts, play a crucial role in posing and composing their images. This explains why good photography is seen as an art which demonstrates skill, technique, and aesthetics. It could be argued that this skill only involves deciding what to leave in and outside of the frame, and therefore photography is selective and not interpretive (cf. Butler 2007: 952). But it is precisely this selective element of photography that makes it an active interpretation rather than a passive reflection. The exhaustive possibilities of the photograph, (which make it appear denotative), are therefore "mythical" (Barthes 1977: 19): what is left out is equally as important as what we
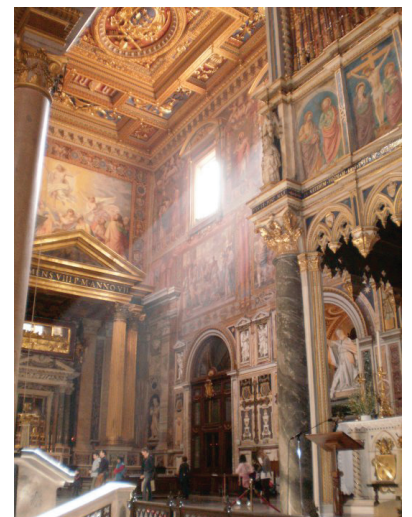

Fig #26

see within the frame - and this leaving out refers not only to the parts of the scene the photographer decides not to include in the composition. What photographs do not explicitly show are the relationships that transcend the barrier of the camera which separates photographers from the people in their photographs: the empathy and learning to which Davidson refers.

photographs should not be construed simply as illustrations whose function is to elaborate where written descriptions fall short

This anthropological analysis of photographs as texts has highlighted the pitfalls of Frobose's plea to let photographs speak for themselves. Photographic data is no different from texts in the sense that it constitutes a selective representation of experiential reality. Photographs should therefore be treated like any other ethnographic data in that they remain strictly embedded within the contexts in which they were taken, and any claims to truth should be approached with caution. "'[C]ultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relation-

Fig #27

ship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship" (Clifford 1986: 10). In leaving photographs to speak for themselves, there is a danger that we bestow upon them a truth they do not possess.

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Fig #26 - Photo by Edward Ball
Fig #27 - Photo by Tristan Partridge
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"Prisoners of a White God" (2008): Film Review

Credits: Produced by Tomáš Ryška, Directed by Steve Lichtag
Awards: Grand Prixes at RAFF Film Festival, Ecofilm Festival, Festival of the Mountain Films, "It's Up To You" Film Festival; Main Prize at Ekotopfilm
Watch for free on EngageMedia for free - www.engagemedia.org

A controversial documentary film that drew the United Nations' attention and reportedly led to death threats against producer Tomáš Ryška, *Prisoners of a White God* exposes the do-gooder hypocrisy of Christian missionaries in Thailand and Laos. Numerous missionaries, largely foreign and funded by overseas organisations such as Youth With A Mission (YWAM) (Hill 2007), run 'orphanages' which school children from the Akha hilltribes away from their mountain villages. Czech researcher Ryška reveals the missionaries' sexual abuses against the children for whom they have assumed responsibility. The film portrays the Akha hilltribes' vulnerability in the face of unequal power relations with the 'white', 'developed' world. The

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corrupt missionaries are just one aspect of the Akha's misery. There is also tourist exploitation, the abject lack of healthcare in the villages and inadequate land rights.

Content aside, what one notices is that *Prisoners of a White God* is, in essence, a film by a white man. It is thanks to his identity that Ryška could befriend the missionaries and gain access to their world, eventually inveigling crucial information from them. So incensed were they by Ryška's exposé that, according to the film, he eventually had to escape from Thailand with his personal safety at risk. To his credit, Ryška reflexively engages with the fact that he can be as much an outsider to the Akhas as are the Christian missionaries. A group of women he encounters on a forest path flees from him; the video camera captures their terrified faces. While the filmmaker does interview the Akha themselves, the story's narrative is largely carried forward by his voice, his views, him speaking in a darkened room about his thoughts and experiences.

Fig #28

Prisoners of a White God is, in essence, a film by a white man

Even as Ryška highlights the Western missionaries' atrocities, he himself is an external actor speaking about the Akha. This film is about the neocolonial imposition of religion, but is Ryška himself interpreting the events from a viewpoint no less external? The sexual abuses are inexcusable, yet the missionaries educate, feed and clothe the children; we may wonder whether the Akha's povertised circumstances leave them with few or no alternatives. If the film had been made by the Akha themselves – if they even had that kind of luxury – what story would they have told, and would different individuals have had varying viewpoints on the situation?

The documentary has garnered international attention from global organisations such as the UN and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The latter commissioned an independent investigation (The Akha Heritage Foundation 2010) which led NGO Norwegian Church Aid to issue new employee regulations. Despite questions of representation, *Prisoners of a White God* has at least brought to light the Akha's marginalised circumstances, and the apparent hypocrisy of the Christian missionaries purportedly helping them. It doesn't take an insider to see this.

if the film had been made by the Akha themselves, what story would they have told?

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Fig #28&#29 - Screenshots from *Prisoners of a White God*

Fig #29

A Need for Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Film Making in West Bengal 2010

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We – my friend, the film maker Jenn Lambert and I, a third year undergraduate anthropologist – arrived in West Bengal last July. We had five weeks, one camera, one self-labelled Himalayan tribe (the Lepchas), no experience, and heaps of enthusiasm to merge the disciplines of film and anthropology and make a documentary in the District of Darjeeling.

Being constricted by conventions led to unsolvable difficulties between our disciplines. For example, whilst I engaged in a conversation regarding how one would go about attaining the status of "a Lepcha" on the side of a rocky mountain in a monsoon afternoon storm, Jenn strived to record the footage as she stumbled over the rocks and attempted to keep the camera dry. It just wasn't working. For me as an anthropologist, it was all about spontaneity and lack of planning and for Jenn as a film maker adhering to conventional techniques, objectives and interview set-ups were a high priority. Under financial and time pressures, I decided to make a conventional documentary under Jenn's direction, and would consequently reflect in writing on how this affected my role as an anthropologist.

> *The camera is overwhelmingly present and will manipulate reality. We should no longer seek to deny this.*

Working within the confines of classical documentary film making presented numerous challenges for my ethnographic endeavours. In line with the conventions of the genre, we attempted to collate footage that suppressed the presence of the camera. Before recording began for each interview, for example, we would ask the interviewee not to look directly into the camera lens. Not surprisingly, this proved to be a challenging task as did the attempt to create appropriate frames for each interview. On a morning at the beginning of our project, we sellotaped eight pieces of paper together and boldly wrote "plan" in the centre. From here we logically decided who and what were to be the significant themes and characters, and what our final product would look like. We decided on our two main protagonists and that our theme would be Language, with a focus on the complex and ambiguous attitudes that are held towards the English and Lepcha languages. These examples attempt to convey the inevitable difficulties we encountered. Of course, as an anthropologist, the idea of planning and directing informant behaviour, whether it be prior to prolonged in-field engagement (as in our case) or at any stage of fieldwork, seems near unthinkable. Such an approach goes against the core principles of anthropology, namely, organic spontaneity and informant-driven analysis.

> *I see no reason why an ethnographic film should not be aesthetically pleasing if the given reality lends itself in this way*

So where does this leave us? Due to my own academic exploration following the trip, I now believe that we can and should work together as anthropologists and film makers by moving beyond conventional methods and by adopting a reflexive method of film making (see Scott Chambers' "Cowboys in India", and more classically, work by Jean Rouch). Unlike my own footage, Chambers' work invites ethnographic film makers to cease attempts to deny the presence of the camera, and the interrogative process of film making, and instead acknowledge it. The camera is overwhelmingly present and will manipulate reality. We should no longer seek to deny this. I feel Chambers' approach is significantly more revealing of the given society than the conventional techniques that we used with the Lepchas. Openness

Fig #30

to the process of how evidence is collected and acknowledgement that evidence is inseparable from the context from which it derives (cf. Hastrup 2004) allows the viewer to take the presented evidence more seriously, and to ask fewer questions about the filming process itself. Furthermore I see no reason why an ethnographic film should not be aesthetically pleasing if the given reality lends itself in this way. During one interview for example, we ensured that flowers were appropriately positioned and removed clothes on the washing line that were concealing the Himalayan view. One should acknowledge the manipulations made to "reality", instead of attempting to deny them, which is ironically what classical ethnographic film makers do by attempting to downplay the inescapable and manipulative presence of the camera. Aesthetically pleasing footage attained through disciplinary collaboration has the ability to draw in larger audiences to ethnographic film without denying its analytical rigour.

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Fig #30 - Photo by Steph Linsdale
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To Own a Tattoo, and How I Obtained Consent

I'm standing outside the tattoo studio and I'm terrified. Cars whiz by behind me. I jump at the blare of a horn, some guy yelling at another. It's chilly out: an early day in October, and I've officially begun my research. Well, once I get consent from the tattoo artists, that is.

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It looks so peaceful inside. I could stand outside all day at the intersection of Water and Hunter, just looking in, fantasising about the buzz of needles and what ethnographic detail I might collect. But then I wouldn't get my thesis done, and I wouldn't graduate. I wouldn't collect any data on what it means to own a tattoo. What it means to the artist who created the tattoo, and has to watch it walk out the door. Maybe the artist spent months working on the tattoo. Maybe the artist didn't want to give it away. But then again, he did sell it to his client. It's just a business transaction, like any other... isn't it? No, this speculation won't do. I must go in. My leg twitches, involuntarily urging me forward. What if I just run away? The tattoo artists wouldn't even know I was here. My supervisor would call me an idiot, and I'd probably have to drop out, but at least this feeling would go away. Where is the literature now? There's nothing to cite about this!

I hold my breath and push open the door. My legs quiver. The tattoos on my arms, on my leg, behind my ear, on my ribs prickle, in anticipation. The studio contradicts the confusion outside. It is clean and orderly, with a reception desk and someone sitting behind it, nodding at me. A man, probably about my age.
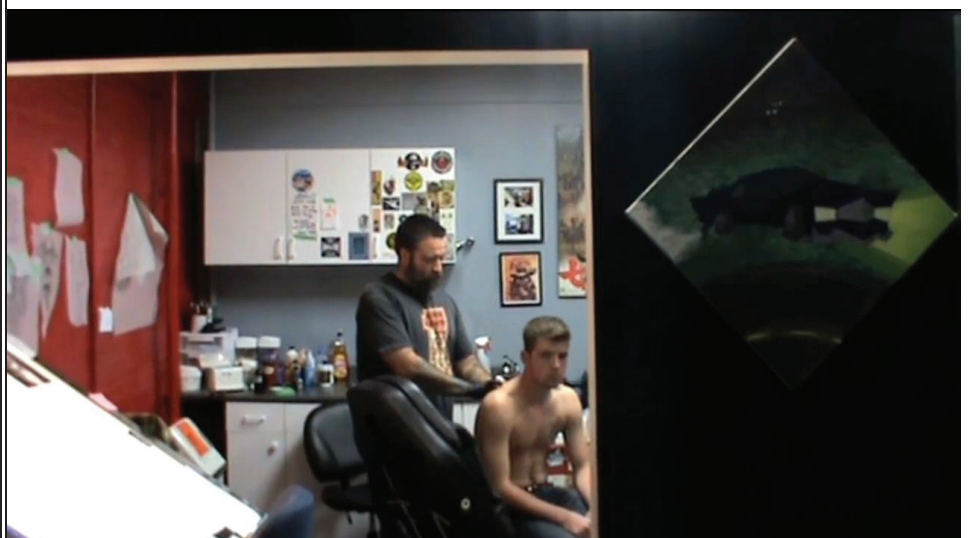

Fig #31

"I'm here to see Mike," I say. "He's the owner, right?"

"Yeah," the guy behind the desk nods, glancing quickly at the sign in the window of the shop. It reads: Mike's Tattoo. "Anything I can help you with?"

"I'm not sure. I don't think so." Oh god, this is going wrong. "No," I say, definitively.

"Alright," the guy says. He gets up, slowly, looking at me, and heads into the back of the shop.

I sigh and take a seat, trying to calm my nerves. The seat is bright red, and plush. This is ridiculous, I think. What the hell do I know about doing fieldwork? I'm an undergraduate, for God's sake. And the field? What am I talking about? I live two minutes away!

"Did I just do ethnography?"

Mike comes out, suddenly. He's massive. A big burly man with a giant beard. Later I'll find out that he was once a lumberjack up North; a real lumberjack heaving an axe into trees. This is insane.

I remember introducing myself and spewing out a quick description of my project. My mouth ran away from me, liberated

Fig #32

from my orderly, academic thoughts. I remember him telling me no problem, come back next week, and I remember being confused. It can't have been that easy. I said I would leave a consent form with him. He glanced at it and smirked. I never did get a signed copy back from him. "See you next week, man," he said, turning back to the shop.

I hobbled out of the studio, nearly paralysed with fear, self-loathing, relief, and a healthy dose of doubt. I was back on the street, just minutes later. Don't people say it is like sex, the first time? Short; really short. And somewhat confusing. What just happened? Did I just do ethnography? I would later realise, after four months of the same, that research does not conform to your original plans. I would do well on

my thesis, despite ultimately not having a clear-cut conclusion about who owns a tattoo: the answer is muddled, like the method.

Oblivious to the honking cars that minutes ago heightened my insecurity, I walked home – an apartment building one block away.
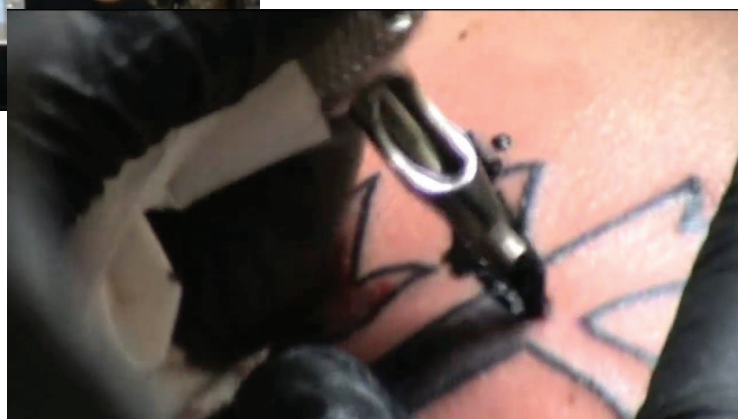

Further exploration:

"This is My Tattoo", a short ethnographic film which was produced by Matthew Hayes as a part of this project, can be viewed for free at http://vimeo.com/10670029

Figs #31 - #34 - Photos by Matthew Hayes

Figs #33 & 34

Theory, Thoughts & Methods

This section explores some of the theoretical, practical and philosophical dilemmas faced by anthropology today. The perspectives of a new generation of anthropologists invariably readdress the discipline's dilemmas in a new light whilst drawing upon the works of their predecessors. Many questions as old as the discipline itself are asked again.

The nature-culture dichotomy and its effect on gender relations is once again brought into question as Katherine A. Relle readapts Sherry Ortner to contemporary concerns. Preparing for fieldwork, Rosemary Blake asks herself "what can be done?" in the face of the suffering many anthropologists will encounter and turns to the concept of "symbolic aid". Toby Austin Locke examines some of the semantic, conceptual and linguistic tensions facing the use of terminology within anthropology and wider discourse. Finally, looking to the future of the discipline, Steph Linsdale holds out a hopeful vision in which anthropology extends its influence beyond the walls of the academy.

Engaging, provocative and deeply reflexive, these contributions dissect not only what anthropology is and does, but also what it should be and do.

– Toby Austin Locke & Johanna Mitterhofer

In Preparation of Fieldwork: a way to wear your heart in the field

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"In a splintered world, we must address the splinters" (Geertz 2000: 221)

I would like to share my thoughts on some of the concerns I find myself facing as I prepare to enter the field, concerns which I would argue are intrinsic to most social research endeavours. However, I will begin by suggesting that in contemporary anthropology there is a dominating tendency to seek out the lives and conditions of the marginalised and to speak to their suffering.

When thinking about my own and others' fieldwork, I often find myself asking the question, "What can be done?" When I was researching in an oncology ward at a child's hospital during my final undergraduate year, I remember the children's confusion over what I was doing there. I wanted to explore and record their experiences in the hospital while they received in-patient treatments, usually chemotherapy. However, they often introduced me to their visiting friends and family as a student doctor, despite my repeated assertions that I possessed no medical expertise whatsoever, nor did I aspire to. I read this confusion as a sign of their implicit assumption or trust that I was there to make things better.

the question of how we might make things better is rarely asked explicitly and even more rarely answered

This assumption often exists amongst anthropologists too, and indeed I did hope I could make things better. However, the question of how we might make things better is rarely asked explicitly and even more rarely answered (or, some might argue, answerable). Vague plans for 'effective dissemination' maybe be listed alongside suspicious critiques of alliances formed with those who are explicitly 'doing something', such as NGOs. The sections on ethics that we insert into our research proposals, like strange appendages that are somehow distinct from the situation and motivation of the research itself, fill up with strategies on how to 'anticipate and avoid potential harm'. Yet anyone who actually finds themselves 'in the field' soon discovers that the greatest ethical dilemmas are those you could never have anticipated. Furthermore, the proposed morality of such strategies is founded on a notion of scientific objectivism where the main ethical and technical onus is on not influencing your data. Never mind that the very notion of influence, along with interlinked notions of neutrality and objective reality, represent to most contemporary social scientists a naïve and outdated view; what about the underlying message that inaction is somehow ethical, or at least not unethical? Let us take it as a given that we are implicated in the inequalities we observe and, moreover, all (in)actions in the field express some political, moral or ethical stance. Thus, with an awareness that something should be done, most of us write up our proposals making or implying promises we do not know whether we should, could or will keep. It becomes empty etiquette.

In the face of this contradiction and the extreme discomfort it can cause – and has been causing for me as I prepare for my PhD research working with people affected by HIV and living in poverty in a South African 'township' – I have latched onto the idea of "man's search for meaning". Inspired by the work of Victor Frankl (2006), a psychoanalyst who practiced his discipline in the most adverse conditions as a prisoner in Auschwitz, I find myself comforted by the thought that perhaps both suffering and resilience stem ultimately from a person's sense (or lack thereof) of meaning in their life. During his time in Auschwitz, Frankl found that those who were able to find or attach some kind of purpose or meaning to their suffering lived longer, both physically and psychologically. He also observed how the inverse, the loss of any sense of meaning, was usually followed swiftly by death. It is as though we can handle any kind of suffering except that which is experienced as meaningless.

most of us write up our proposals making or implying promises we do not know whether we should, could or will keep

Isn't meaning, in all its guises, what anthropologists are usually seeking to discover and create after all? And if suffering can be made more bearable by being given meaning, then perhaps I can assume the role of co-author with my informants in a search for such meaning. Am I equipped to do this? Empathy seems a good place to start, but even here I am probably lacking; if empathy is journeying alongside someone in their suffering, how far am I prepared to go? We talk about being 'immersed in the field' and as with the immersion of baptism we enter, and then quickly exit. We may 'never be the same again' (whatever that means) but we also aren't there anymore. To cope with the depressing and somewhat embarrassing insight that I will probably always return to a position of privilege and security that far exceeds that of those I study, I have

Fig #35

started to grapple with how I might be of some benefit. To this end, I find myself making a distinction between material lack and symbolic lack, material suffering and symbolic suffering, material help and symbolic help.

if empathy is journeying alongside someone in their suffering, how far am I prepared to go?

I think that I am representative of the majority of students, and probably most anthropologists, in going into the field with few material means. Materially, I have very little to offer except my efforts in using my relatively privileged position to try and open up other channels of material assistance. This is something that anthropologists often do, and certainly should continue to do. However, what about those occasions (common, I fear) when material assistance is not forthcoming or desperately insufficient, despite our efforts? No interaction leaves those interacting unchanged. The idea of 'symbolic aid' is really just a space in which to think about all the other, non-material ways in which our presence might be beneficial. It is also a way of asserting the burden of responsibility we have towards those we study.

A search for meaning in the lives and sufferings of those I will be working with is how I envision giving them symbolic aid. It is quite possible that this endeavour will

turn out to be impossible or even grossly misguided, but I feel that this is the way I must go into the field. I am terrified of the confrontation with human suffering that awaits me, that will demand a response from me, and so I make this presumption of a universal need for meaning beforehand. I sincerely hope that this is a moral decision, not a cowardly one, and that somehow I might be able to help my informants to find meaning in the stories they bravely share.

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Fig #35 - Photo by Edward Ball

Analysing Sherry Ortner: In Defence of Nature vs Culture

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Women remain internationally restricted by a glass ceiling, despite the egalitarian façade presented in the West. Examples of male dominance govern the public realm across the globe. Man's superiority over woman is evidenced in various hierarchies, even though implicit male dominance in the public realm is matched by women's dominance of roles in the private realm. This dichotomous separation is apparent in women's prevalent control over household chores and child-rearing. Sherry Ortner (1974) argues for the universality of the "secondary status of women in [all] societies" (67). For Ortner, women's subordination is indisputable in all cultures and can be explained by the following formula: female is to man as nature is to culture (ibid). Some critics argue that this formula is too simplistic. Nonetheless, the analogy presented by Ortner, whereby females oppose males in the same way that nature opposes culture, is valid: it wholly explains the universal subordination outlined by this dichotomy.

As such, Ortner's use of simple fundamentals captures the deep-seated debate at its most basic level, unpacking how different gender perceptions allow stereotypes to perpetuate. Women are restricted by certain biological functions of the female anatomy, such as by the nursing of children—a practice that constrains women to the private realm and thus prevents full integration into the male-dominated public sphere. The "universal secondary status of women [is a given" that perpetuates women's inferiority across time and space *(ibid:* 71).

In "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?", Ortner explores how the "actual treatment of women and their relative power ... [varies] enormously from culture to culture" *(ibid*: 67). All societies, nevertheless, remain male-dominated while the "devaluation of women" is perpetuated by common perceptions that women are closer to the natural processes of human life than men *(ibid*: 69). Women's bodies and their functions are more intrinsically involved with biological reproduction. For Ortner, reproductive functions inherent to womanhood place females in a confining private role. This position is not intrinsically problematic; however, when women's roles in the private realm are contrasted with men's roles in the public realm women are viewed as inferior social beings. Social roles imposed by the body give women a different psychic structure, which bolsters their perceived inferiority to men *(ibid*: 74).

For Ortner, a woman's body "dooms her to mere reproduction of life; the male in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally [or artificially] ... through the medium of technology and symbols" *(ibid*: 75). Structurally, female inferiority is reinforced by the way in which the nature/culture binary is symbolically tied to a variety of other binary constructs such as 'down', 'left', 'low', and 'unclean'. Conversely, males conceptually relate to 'up', 'right', 'high', and 'clean', making masculinity a prevailing force to the public eye. These extra binaries, implicit in nature/culture, reinforce women's inferiority and add rigidity to the overall structure.

> *Ortner's use of simple fundamentals captures the deep-seated debate at its most basic level*

Opponents, such as anthropologist J.M. Atkinson, reject the notion of a universal subordination of women. In "How Gender Makes a Difference in Wana Society" (1990), Atkinson studies the egalitarianism of the Wana, a group of indigenous people from Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. For the Wana, leadership is based on persuasion rather than coercion. Social hierarchies are minimal across both vertical and horizontal planes. Atkinson believes that the Wana present an example whereby "gender inequality emerges principally in political contexts at the community level and beyond, and is more discernable in political practice then in the cultural representations that practice invokes" (Atkinson 1990: 76).

For Atkinson, gender roles are indistinguishable and social hierarchy is based on some other diffuse difference. Atkinson reveals the identical "unitary origins" that Wana men and women have (*ibid*: 79). The origins include both male and female roles as "life-givers" in the process of procreation (*ibid*). For the Wana, both men and women give birth, menstruate, and carry on like-roles as similar sources of humanity. The Wana seem to represent the ultimate gender-equal society.

However, the Wana falsely represent this egalitarianism; their political system is actually controlled by men. Controversially, Atkinson states that for the Wana, "men are like women, and something more" (*ibid:* 92). She explains how the men in Wana society are perceived to have only eight sets of ribs, whereas women have nine. Wana men, however, compensate their missing ribs with their genitals as a "knife of bravery" *(ibid)*.

The knife of bravery allows the well-equipped Wana men to take a leading role in complex cultural institutions such as politics. Hence, women are subordinated by the perception that man has the tools, provided to him by culture, to enhance his organic deficiency: his inability to procreate. Man cannot actually procreate so he uses culture to compensate for his absence in the natural realm. This myth, which Atkinson illustrates, classifies female with nature and male with culture; the public and the private sphere may intersect with respect to gender roles, but the two do not necessarily conflate.

In contemporary Western society it seems common that public leadership positions remain male-dominated. In fact, tasks that generally define the private realm, such as cooking and prayer, are often led by male figures when introduced to the public realm. It is often pointed out that the most famous chefs are frequently men. In an informal survey that I gave to 30 individuals, 'Gordon Ramsay' and 'Wolfgang Puck' were the two names most frequently stated when individuals were asked to identify the world's most famous chef. Similarly, the face of religious life is male-dominated; the Pope is a clear symbol of such dominance. Likewise, the Eastern Orthodox tradition assigns priesthood solely to men and prohibits any woman from entering the sacred altar of an Orthodox church, unless she is to clean it while the

Fig #36

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congregation is absent. Thus, the tasks which women diligently work to perfect in the private realm—such as cooking and prayer—are delegated to men in the public spheres, while only in exceptional circumstances are women included in such 'high' culture.

> tasks that generally define the private realm, such as cooking and prayer, are often led by male figures when introduced in the public realm

Despite Atkinson's attempt to refute Ortner's theory, there remains a fundamental dichotomy between the roles which men and women occupy in society. The notion that female is to male as nature is to culture ultimately holds true. Ortner's analogy disproves Atkinson's idea that there exists an apparent egalitarianism between men and women, as the female anatomy constrains the latter to the private spheres of society, creating a public perception that universally subordinates females to males. Perception traps women in a liminal stage across time and space, perpetuating women's inferiority in the male-dominated world.

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Fig #36 - Photo by Katherine A. Relle

It's Social Science, not Semantics

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"We should altogether avoid, like the plague, discussing the meaning of words."
Karl Popper 1979: 309

During a seminar this year, it was suggested that anthropologists should no longer discuss "culture", as it allowed for the perpetuation of prejudiced ideas. Angela Merkel's comments regarding Turkish integration into German society were cited as an example. Merkel had implied that there is an intrinsic factor within Turkish culture which prevents integration[1]. The students' reaction to this suggestion was mixed, but for me the most appropriate response was: "Well then, shall we just give up on anthropology all together?" What follows is a somewhat provocative discussion of semantics which seeks to spark debate on the issue.

An argument made for the suggested abandonment of the culture concept is that its use in political discourse damages its anthropological application and that it provides a foundation for cultural segregation. The use of the term culture by Merkel implied that there is one 'Turkish culture', definable, delimited and contrastable to 'German culture' within an arborescent system[2]. This use of culture establishes "a kind of cultural polycentrism, a multiplication of ethnocentrism" (Guattari & Rolink 2008: 25); it segregates people and assigns them to a particular cultural category. The application of culture in this sense is opposed to its use as a methodological tool: an intangible, incomplete concept in a permanent state of becoming[3]. As such, it is a means for discussing that which would otherwise be unspeakable or even unthinkable; it allows the discussion of collective action, thought and processes but remains undefined, malleable and nomadic. It is in the former, strictly defined form, that the danger of the concept lies.

To abandon a concept purely because of its political use could be seen as an academic crime of the highest order. Should we abandon the works of Nietzsche due to their misappropriation during the Third Reich? Should we ignore the field of genetics simply due to the fact it can be misrepresented as the foundations of racism? Of course not. Why, then, should the culture concept be avoided because of its appropriation? Anthropologists and ethnographers should continue to utilise culture as a methodological tool regardless of its application within political discourse. In fact, it should be used all the more fervently.

> Anthropologists and ethnographers should continue to utilise culture as a methodological tool regardless of its application within political discourse. In fact, it should be used all the more fervently

Naturally, social scientists must remain cautious of falling into the same pit as Merkel; they must choose language care-

fully. Any writer is required to select the appropriate linguistic method with which to convey their statements. However, academics and writers should not be penalised for choosing problematic words; provided they have constructed an intelligible argument and provided context, the semantic specificities are irrelevant. As Karl Popper observes, "words do not matter, as long as one is not misled by them" (1979: 18). It is not the word culture which leads to ethnocentrism but its conceptual application within a specific discourse.

The linguistic tensions outlined are apparent in a variety of discourses. I would like to briefly examine the use of the word "creolization" within this context. In his work on the Caribbean, Sidney Mintz (2010) argues that the term is specific to the region:

My purpose is simply to attempt on paper to restore to creolization what I think must have been its original meaning. Fortunately, definitions cannot be legislated; nor should they be. But I think that the enlargement of the word creolization into an umbrella term for widely variant types of culture change has snatched from the African-American experience its extraordinary significance in world history (205-6)

While it is understandable that Mintz wishes to stress the uniqueness of the Caribbean situation, this does not mean that terminology should be only applicable to a particular occurrence. To insist upon its idiosyncrasy becomes an act of delimitation similar to the one previously discussed. Such a definition of "creolization" would place the Caribbean in distinction to the rest of humanity; it would indeed be an act of orientalism. If "creolization" is the best word for the portrayal of conceptual information outside the field of Caribbean ethnography, who is to say that the word should not be used? The use of this term by somebody discussing globalization in rural Tibet, for example, does not detract from Mintz's original definition or argument on any level. Rather, it uses language as it should be used in scholastic endeavours: as a tool for the conveying conceptual information, a carriage in which theory travels from one mind to another. It should be remembered that words should be taken for "the signs of our ideas only, and not for things themselves" (Locke 2009: 98). Furthermore, the malleable nature of concepts should be acknowledged, since "ideas are always reusable" (Deleuze & Guattari 2002: 259). Hence neither the term nor the concept "creolization" can be claimed as entirely idiosyncratic.

it is not the word culture which leads to ethnocentrism but its conceptual application within a specific discourse

I do not intend to legitimise the misappropriation of terminology; rather I seek to encourage a less rigid approach to language as a means of conveying conceptual content. Through the overemphasis of semantic debates based on structural rigidity, social scientists are guilty of undermining their own disciplines, creating an image of an in-fighting, unsure and confused anthropology. Words can and do hold multiple meanings. It is the context in which they are placed which grants them a particular application. The findings of anthropology will always be mediated through subjective experience; hence neither term nor concept can be entirely objectively definable. Structural, fixed and taxonomical definitions will invariably lead to hierarchy, stratification and theoretical imposition, allowing for ethnocentric segregation. For anthropology to be meaningful it must remain fluid, malleable and nomadic.

Notes:

1. See The Economist 11th Nov 2010 'Multikulturell? Wir?' and The Economist Online 22nd Oct 2010 'Is multi-kulti dead?'

2. This term (arborescent) I take from the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It denotes a schema of knowledge which takes a 'tree-like' form whereby particular instances of an immutable concept (i.e. culture) are organised vertically creating a hierarchized schema in which the concrete is subordinate to the abstract.

3. This term (becoming) I also take from the works of Gilles Deleuze. Grossly simplified it means a process whereby constituent parts affect one another, or are affected, resulting in a new form, i.e. becoming-other-than-itself.

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Fig #37 - Cartoon by Abi Lander

Fig #37

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A Hopeful Anthropological Vision

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In my undergraduate anthropology studies, I have become aware that the discipline has much to contribute through collaboration on a global scale. For example, its open-minded willingness to embrace and appreciate the different opinions and lifestyles of others is a lesson from which both academic and public circles could learn a great deal. Such a valuable philosophy is unfortunately only paid lip service within popular culture or as part of political agendas, meaning that an appreciation and tolerance of difference is yet to be fully realised even among the grassroots. One has to look no further than the deep inequalities that stubbornly persist in our own present day society to see this. And this is where anthropology's ideological value comes in.

I believe anthropology, particularly the philosophy of tolerance and understanding that lies at the core of the discipline, should be part of the curriculum from primary school age. This philosophy becomes increasingly urgent in the face of globalisation and ever increasing cross-cultural interaction. If children at a young age were given the ability to appreciate their existence on a global scale and grasp just how varied we are as humans, to truly embody and act within this mindset and not just talk about it, I am in no doubt that the attitudes of our younger generation would be positively enhanced in two key ways. First, anthropology's call for an empathic mindset of openness towards others would help create the tolerant society we need to deal with multiculturalism and the interconnectedness of the modern world. Secondly, it would allow younger people to be more open to interdisciplinary dialogue in their future careers. Such

dialogue promises more sophisticated and effective tackling of social, economic and political challenges on a global scale. Take, for example, a sixteen-year-old budding economist who's been given a solid grounding in anthropology. When he enters his chosen economic profession, his embodied anthropological values would increase his ability to think on a wider scale, beyond constrictive market-orientated economic theory, in order to be more open to the possibility of interdisciplinary dialogue. As idealistic as this may sound, we must believe in it as a possibility. We need an alternative to society's prioritisation of pure economic theory, particularly at this time of financial difficulty. This can be done through instilling attitudes of broader understanding and open-mindedness amongst people at a younger age through the teaching of anthropology.

> *it is imperative to not only recognise, but act upon the doubt that the financial crisis has cast upon the effectiveness of universal economic theory.*

I have too often heard rash criticisms of anthropology because it struggles to fit into the West's prioritisation of numerical facts and figures that provide easily digestible, clear and concrete 'facts'. Of course, at present, anthropology will not gain the respect of hard line science in a Euro-American context because of the domination of positivist, economic and neuroscientific theory. But the continual negation of anthropology in rational Western thinking is unfruitful. Anthropology has so much to offer that cannot be quantified by the criteria established by the rules of strictly empirical science; its value does not lie in creating universals and indestructible evidence. It is a way of

thinking that has the potential to be so powerful in tacking persisting inequalities worldwide when taken in conjunction with economic theory.

> *anthropologists must strive to move beyond the boundaries of the academy, allowing the value of their ideas to break out of insular intellectual dialogue.*

Economic theory can't do it alone. In their recent book *The Human Economy* (2010), Hart et al sing out this message, seeking to offer an alternative to neoliberal economic theory with the question 'how else can we do it?' (Hart 2011). This question requires urgent attention in light of the recent financial crisis. We must not be overtaken by the inviting simplicity of economic theory that refers only to the proliferation of markets. We must instead utilise the promising alternative principles proposed by Hart et al in order to recognise that humans sustain their lives in ways that move beyond simplistic market principles (see also Hart's work on The Informal Economy). This idea of moving beyond the confines of market principles may seem obvious to many, yet this is precisely what recent economic theory has failed to account for, and precisely where the value of anthropology comes in. We must look at how human beings in microlevel contexts seek to sustain life in ways that move beyond simplistic market principles, in order to tap into "a perceived public need" that accounts for more than current economic theory (Hart 2011).

It is imperative to not only recognise, but act upon the doubt that the financial crisis has cast upon the effectiveness of universal economic theory. World Bank President Robert Zoellick, for example, has

recently called for a possible return to gold as the core underpinning of true value, as opposed to financial institutions. This is because, as Gillian Tett, an anthropologist and now US managing editor of the *Financial Times* says, gold is "a store of value that does not rely on a central bank". At a grassroots level, people are suspicious that banks will fail to back up numerical figures with real value in light of recent irresponsible applications of grand capitalist theory. A nuanced understanding of grassroots complexities is what anthropology has to offer, allowing for the development of economic policies that look to appreciate contextual specificities permitting more effective policies to be developed and implemented. It is clumsy and in many ways naively simplistic to think that one theory will fit all. It is sensible to attempt to find and fully utilise any cross-cultural similarities, but we cannot presume they are there without looking for them.

I'm not arguing in favour of anthropological domination, nor am I looking to paint an unconditionally rosy picture of the discipline

We must realise the full potential of anthropology's dedication to 'looking' by removing it from the confines of academia

Fig #39

Fig #38

and incorporating it into real world policy. I'm not arguing in favour of anthropological domination, nor am I looking to paint an unconditionally rosy picture of the discipline. At times, particularly as I delve into my third year, I wistfully romanticise about developing a genuinely helpful universal theory of my own. Maurice Bloch, one of our generation's most forward-thinking cognitive anthropologists who teaches here at the LSE, fuels my ambition during his inspiring lectures. I understand the appeal and usefulness of establishing certain grand universal theories; we feel comfortable and secure in our belief that this is how things will always work. Sometimes such theories can be usefully applied in particular contexts. But I worry that Western academic circles are becoming increasingly preoccupied in the search for such grandeur without raising their heads above the academic parapet to realise that this is not always the most effective way to tackle enduring global inequalities, or a financial crisis for that matter. Too often anthropology is dismissed as 'woolly' when actually the discipline needs to be recognised in its own right, especially that its central point is not necessarily to universalise. I am not calling for an end to universal theorising, but we need to balance this approach with an understanding of complexity and difference that may problematise such theories. It is imperative to look at black and white theories in conjunction with the nuanced intricacies of reality; anthropologists and economists desperately need to get talking.

Anthropology needs to embrace the contemporary world, and the world must embrace it. It is vital for people to hear what it has say, to inspire and inform public policy, to enter into rigorous political debate, to invoke tolerance within our society, to speak out in the media and to help tackle

economic crises. Anthropologists must strive to move beyond the boundaries of the academy, allowing the value of their ideas to break out of insular intellectual dialogue. With skill, drive and compromise on the part of both the public and the scholars, I believe that there is a way for nuanced anthropological complexities to be translated for the public domain, and for disciplines to enter into dialogue. However much I value anthropology for providing me with a lifelong philosophical outlook to aid my global understanding, it is unlikely that I will ever become an anthropologist in a strictly academic sense. There is a more urgent and imperative need for universalists and relativists to enter into tolerant, sensitive and forward-looking dialogue. It is therefore crucial for anthropologists, economists and others to remain hopeful that fruits will be born out of creative interdisciplinary collaboration, in order to tackle global crises in a more sensitive yet equally pragmatic way.

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Fig #38 - Photo by Camilla Burkot
Fig #39 - Photo by Edward Ball

2011 ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVENTS OF NOTE...

FIELD SCHOOLS AND COURSES:

Film-making for fieldwork 2011 – practical short courses
May 22 - June 3; June 12 - 22, Manchester

Offered by the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology in conjunction with the University of Manchester Media Centre, these short courses are designed for anthropologists and other social researchers who wish to explore the practical implications of making documentary films as part of a programme of ethnographic field research. Aimed at postgraduates but postdocs and undergraduates equally welcome. The first course introduces the basic techniques of documentary film-making, the second course focuses on editing. All equipment supplied.

www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/socialanthropology/visualanthropology/newfieldworkfilm/

Noémie Rouault: noemie.rouault@manchester.ac.uk

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OSEA Heritage Ethnography Field School
May 22 - July 9, Yucatan, Mexico

Provides training in ethnographic field work and research methods. Students receive an intensive introduction to spoken Maya langauge for use in the conduct of fieldwork, and can design and conduct practical research projects on heritage issues in the Maya communities. There is also a seminar on the analytical foundations for understanding and investigating heritage in local and global contexts. Participants can choose to do ethographic projects with a traditional research agenda or applied/action-based research.

www.osea-cite.org/program/heritage.php

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Summer Research Experience for Undergraduates in Ethnography and GIS
June 6 - July 15, Arizona

Run by the University Arizona in association with the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Participants engage in community-based participatory research, working with Western Apache elders, tribal natural resource managers, and heritage program personnel to contribute to the Apache tribes' efforts to document cultural histories, traditional and local ecological and geographic knowledge, and issues of historic and contemporary resource management. Students' final projects will be included in a Western Apache cultural and historical atlas.

anthropology.arizona.edu/content/western_apache_ethnography_and_gis_research_experience_undergraduates

Karl Hoerig: khoerig@fortapachearizona.org

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Off the Beaten Track - Summer School for Anthropologists
July 5 - 25, Malta

Connected to the University of Leuven, Belgium, this summer program is held on the islet of Gozo, Malta. It combines a mix of academic lectures, fieldwork, and fieldtrips for both undergraduate and graduate students. Lectures cover Maltese culture, architecture, economics and tourism. Optional courses include anthropological photography, anthropology of food and a PADI diving course. Participants' research findings will be published.

www.anthropologyfieldschool.org

Sam Janssen: sam.janssen@xpeditions.be

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Urban Photography Summer School
July 11 - 23, Goldsmiths, London

Designed for photographers, artists and ethnographers whose work addresses notions of urban space and culture, the Urban Photography Summer School provides a highly intensive two weeks practical and theoretical training in key aspects of urban visual practice. The course aims to offer participants a wide range of relevant skills resulting in the production of a photography portfolio drawn from London's urban environments, along with a collective final exhibition. Developed in collaboration with Urban Encounters and the Centre for Urban and Community Research. Participants should bring their own laptops and cameras.

www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/summer%20school/

Beatriz Véliz Argueta: exs01bv@gold.ac.uk

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Konitsa International Summer School
July 17 - August 11, University of Ioannina, Konitsa, Greece

This is the 6th Summer School in Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans. All students study ethnographic research in border areas, plus four additional courses chosen from themes including theory, audio-visual methods, migration, museums and diaspora.

www.hist-arch.uoi.gr/SUMMERSCHOOL

konitsa.summerschool@gmail.com

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STUDENT JOURNALS:

Undergraduate Journal of Anthropology and Archaeology (previously Anthropology Tomorrow): University of Toronto

An undergraduate journal both for and run by students, supporting a strict peer-review process. Publishes essays, research reports and book reviews in multiple areas of anthropology.

uja.library.utoronto.ca

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URC Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences

US reviewed journal for undergraduate research. Submissions are accepted for review on an ongoing basis. Papers may represent a full range of research design, including experiments, surveys, case studies, and documentary research. Themes of research may include, but are not limited to, integrative, cross-specialisation research; service learning research; and traditional research in the specialisations.

www.kon.org/urc/

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TOTEM - The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology

A peer-reviewed, student-run journal of anthropology published annually. Aims to publish exceptional works of creative and original research by undergraduate and graduate students in any of the four sub-fields of anthropology.

ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem

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NASA e-Journal

The US National Association of Student Anthropologists publishes an online Journal to allow student anthropologists to publish scholarly articles based on original research and commentaries about anthropology and anthropological experiences. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis.

www.studentanthropologists.org

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Nota Bene, Sabanci University, Istanbul

An online journal consisting of student papers reviewed by peers and professors working in the fields relevant to the paper. It includes essays, critiques, commentaries, research papers written in English or Turkish and is published online bianually, in January and June.

kulup.sabanciuniv.edu/~notabene

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Abantu, University of Cape Town, South Africa

An undergraduate-driven peer-reviewed anthropology student journal aiming to provide students with a forum for discussion and exploration. The editors welcome collaboration with students at other institutions, and any responses can be emailed to abantu@gmail.com.

70.86.182.34/~anthropo

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NEXUS, The Canadian Student Journal of Anthropology, McMaster University

A graduate student-run publication from the Department of Anthropology, McMaster University, Canada. For nearly thirty years NEXUS has provided a forum for four-field student work in anthropology from Canadian and international colleges and universities. Accepts both graduate and undergradaute work.

digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/nexus

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University of Wisconsin-Madison Journal of Undergraduate International Studies

Peer-reviewed journal publishing undergraduate work related to international themes and topics including, but not limited to: international conflict and conflict resolution, human rights, environmental issues, history, comparative politics and economics, development and trade, global security and international health. Publishes a full issue each semester.

juis.global.wisc.edu

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CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS:

Inform Spring Seminar
May 14, LSE, London

Inform is an academic charity that aims to "help people through providing them with accurate, balanced, up-to-date information about new and/or alternative religious or spiritual movements." This year's seminar is entitled "African New Religions in the West".

www.inform.ac

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First International Conference on International Relations and Development
May 19 - 20, Bangkok

Title: Governance, Human Rights and Development: Challenges for Southeast Asia and Beyond.

www.icird.org/

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First International Symposium on Visual Culture
May 20 - 21, Istanbul

Themed on "Mobility and Fantasy in Visual Culture".

http://mfvc.bahcesehir.edu.tr/

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International Conference on Materiality, Memory and Cultural Heritage
May 25 - 29, Istanbul

http://www.materialitymemoryculturalheritage.com/

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Sheffield Doc/fest 2011
June 8 - 12

One of the world's most prominent events in documentary film.

sheffdocfest.com

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Food and Drink: their Social, Political and Cultural Histories
June 15 - 17, Preston, UK

An international conference at the University of Central Lancashire.

www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/fm/services/conferences/uclan/food_and_drink

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RAI International Festival of Ethnographic Film
June 23 - 26, London

Acclaimed film festival run by the UK's Royal Anthropological Institute every two years. This year it is held in conjunction with The UCL Department of Anthropology and InSight Education.

raifilmfest.org.uk

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Advancing the Social Science of Tourism
June 28 - July 1, Guildford, UK

An international conference at the University of Surrey.

ocs.som.surrey.ac.uk/index.php/tourism/tourism2011

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The Inclusive Museum Fourth International Conference
June 30 - July 3, Johannesburg

Annual conference of the online Inclusive Museum knowledge community, dealing with the future of museums, knowledge and ethnography in the age of the internet. "Virtual" attendance possible for those unable to travel.

onmuseums.com/conference-2011

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Cultural Difference and Social Solidarity Conference
July 4 - 8, Cyprus

New international initiative aiming to spark discourse on "Dividing and Uniting Communities Beyond Multiculturalism".

differenceandsolidarity.org

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International Conference on Afro-Hispanic, Luso-Brasilian and Latin American Studies
August 2 - 5, Accra, Ghana

Addresses matters regarding peoples of African ancestry in the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking worlds.

personal.tcu.edu/kaggor/ConferenceMain.htm

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KIAS Undergraduate Student Conference
August 17 - 20, Edmonton, Canada

A unique undergraduate conference for the social sciences in the vibrant city of Edmonton. You must submit a paper to attend.

http://www.kias.ualberta.ca/KiasConferences.aspx

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Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference
September 18 - 21, Boulder, Colorado

This year's conference theme will be Evolution and Revolution: change in ethnographic work.

www.epiconference.com/2011

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ESRC Festival of Social Science
October 29 - November 5, UK

A series of events across the country for specialists and general public alike, run the by the Economic and Social Research Council.

www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/festival

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Vampires: Myths of the Past and the Future
November 2 - 4, UCL, London

An interdisciplinary conference organised by The London Consortium in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory, Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of London.

igrs.sas.ac.uk/index.php?id=496

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Jean Rouch International Film Festival
November 7 - 12, Paris

Ethnographic film "panorama", held every year since 1982. Extra special program for 30th anniversary.

www.comite-film-ethno.net

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AAA Annual Meeting
November 16 - 20, Montreal, Canada

The theme for this year's conference (the Association's 110th) will be Traces, Tidemarks and Legacies.

www.aaanet.org/meetings

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Matthew Hayes

Priyanka Srinivasa

Sasha Flatau

Alexandre Nasr

Jonas L. Tinius

Sabrina Szeto

Tristan Partridge

Not pictured: Mingjuan Tan and Michael Philo

Adam Payne

John Wallis

Jeremy Withers

Toby Austin Locke

Steph Linsdale

Diana Julià Llobet

Ely Rosenblum

Rosemary Blake

Katherine A. Relle

Emily Parker

Abigail Ettelman